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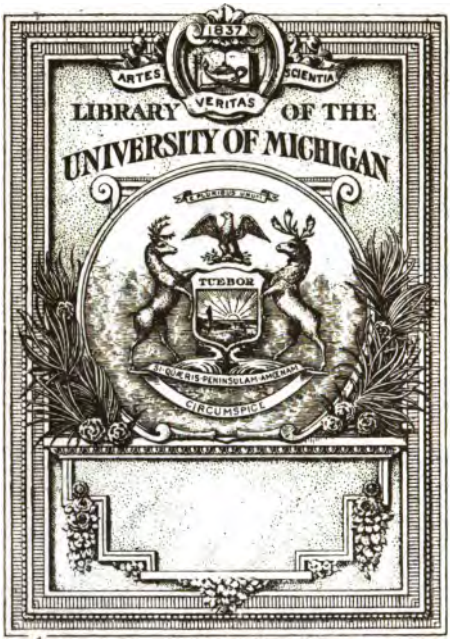

THE GIFT OF
Mr. Sidney C. Eastman

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Bird, Robert Montgomery.
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NICK OF THE WOODS;

A STORY OF KENTUCKY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SPARTACUS," &c.

EDITED BY

W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "ROOKWOOD," "CRICHTON," &c.

Unenlighten'd man,—
A savage, roaming through the woods and wilds,
In quest of prey, and with th' unfashion'd fur
Rough clad.
THOMSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1837.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Dr. Bird's name is well known in the literature of the United States. "Calavar," "The Infidel," and "Spartacus," have secured him a high reputation among his countrymen. The following tale is the last, and, in some respects, the most striking of his efforts. It is filled with adventure of a kind which could only have arisen in the vast and primeval forests of North America, at a period when the savage Indian was perpetually engaged in sanguinary feuds with the scarcely less savage Back-woodsman, the latter of whom, nevertheless, boasts his connexion with the civilized world. The sympathy of European nations is enlisted on the side of the Red Man, who is remorselessly hunted from his lands and possessions by his Anglo-American invaders. But, with a view to turn the current of this feeling, Dr. Bird exhibits to us the

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Aborigines of North America, not as men possessing the heroic virtues ascribed to them by Heckewelder and others, but as wretches stained by every vice, and having no one redeeming quality. According to our author, they are crafty, perfidious, cruel, and dastardly; and are guilty, moreover, of making war upon women and children. If Dr. Bird's views on this subject are coloured by national antipathy, and by a desire to justify the encroachments of his countrymen upon the persecuted natives, rather than by a reasonable estimate of the subject, it cannot be denied that the scenes and incidents by which he has illustrated his opinion are, in the highest degree, original and interesting. His descriptions of the forest scenery of North America are every where marked by great power:—The gloom, the solitude, the gigantic height of the trees, the tangled intricacies of the wilderness, the forlorn log-house, the rushing torrent, the perilous ford, and the almost interminable extent of the vast and "immemorial woods," are delineated by Dr. Bird with a master-hand.

To the reader of romance, nothing is dearer than fearful adventure, hair-breadth escapes, and pro-

found mystery. In these qualities, Dr. BIRD's work is conspicuous; and, though the scene of action is dreary and sombre, gleams are ever and anon thrown over it, by the freaks and humours of his comic characters, like bursts of sunshine on a desolate landscape. Among these the most prominent is "Roaring Ralph Stackpole," the "horse-thief." The sketch of this Trans-atlantic Autolycus, whose feats rival those of the celebrated Cahir-na-Cappul, the Irish Rapparee, and whose vivacity is only equalled by his agility, appears to me perfect in its way. My partiality, however, for another scarcely-less notorious "horse-thief" of our own country, to whose class honest Ralph belongs, may have made me attach more exclusive importance to this amusing personage than he merits, since in general drollery, and in the particular comicality of the Yankee perversion of our tongue, "Pardon Dodge," the pedlar, is almost equal to Ralph himself. These two characters, though they have much in common, are skilfully and dramatically discriminated. Dodge, by nature a dastard, is frightened into valour. Ralph, though brave as a lion, is nevertheless guilty, in the most ludicrous

degree, of the coward's vices—boasting and bullying. Wandering Nathan is a grand conception, most strikingly worked out. He has set up, as it were, an altar to Revenge, and terrible are the sacrifices he makes upon it.

As Dr. BIRD's works are by no means so well-known in this country as their great merits deserve, and as I have been much impressed by the genius displayed in the present work (an early copy of which was placed in my hands by Mr. Bentley), I have ventured to introduce "Nick of the Woods" to my countrymen. As a stranger, I hope they will give him welcome, and I trust they will not consider my own acquaintance with them too slight and limited to justify the freedom I have taken.

LONDON, *May* 1837.

PREFACE.

A PECULIARLY romantic interest has ever been attached to the name and history of Kentucky,—the first region of the great ultramontane Wilderness penetrated by the *Saggenah*, or Englishman,—the first torn from its aboriginal possessors, and converted from a desert hunting-ground into the home of civilized men. The ramblings of the solitary Boone, in whose woodland adventures we recognise the influence of the wild passion, as common on the American frontier as in the poet's closet,—

> To roam for food, and be a naked man,
> And wander up and down at liberty,—

and the fierce strife of those who followed in his paths, with the lords of the forest, are chapters in its annals, which, if they be not themselves poetry, are productive of all its effects on the minds of the dreamy and imaginative.

But apart from the charm the history of Kentucky possesses for the romantic, it has an interest scarcely inferior for the grave and reflecting. This is derived from a consideration of the cha-

racter of the men by whom, in the midst of difficulties and dangers as numerous and urgent,—perhaps more so than ever attended the establishing any colony in North America,—were laid, upon a basis as firm as if planned by the subtlest and wisest spirits of the age, the foundations of a great and powerful State. They were, with but few exceptions, men drawn from what, in our vanity, we call the humbler spheres of life,—farmers and hunters, the mountaineers of Virginia and the Carolinas,—men "born," to use the words of their own historian, "in indigence, and nurtured in ignorance, thrown upon the world without a ray of science to guide, or even the rudiments by which it was to be obtained," but who, under all these disadvantages, without the influence of any great and experienced mind to impel, direct, or counsel, succeeded in their vast enterprise, wrested from the savage the garden-land of his domain, and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws. Their success may be considered a phenomenon in history: but the philosophic examiner will perhaps find in it an illustration of the efficacy of the republican principle in enlarging the mind, and awakening the energies, of men whom the influence of another code of political faith would have kept in the darkness and insignificance to which they were born. It is not to be denied that men of

education and refinement were to be found among the earlier settlers of Kentucky: but the most prominent and distinguished founders, the commanders of the Stations, the leaders of the military forces,—those who are, and must continue to be, recollected as the true fathers of the State, were such persons as we have described, ignorant but ardent, unpolished and unpretending, yet brave, sagacious, and energetic,—the very men, in fact, for the time and the occasion.

These remarks will serve as an explanation, and, if it be necessary, as an apology for some of the characters that figure in the following pages, particularly that of the honest Colonel of militia. In a story written to illustrate the early period in which those men were busily engaged in strengthening and securing their little State,—a period the darkest and stormiest in the annals of the Indian border,—it was both fitting and necessary that some representative of the race should appear. The outlines may be ruder than was proper or just; but they will be the better foil to the generous qualities of spirit, common, at that day, to all the men of Bruce's class.

An objection of the same kind may perhaps apply to the character of Ralph Stackpole. But *that*, we beg the reader to understand, is no portrait drawn from imagination. The history of this wild scape-gallows, his prowess in the pin-

fold and the battle-field, his adventure on the beech-tree, and his escape from the meshes of the law, with other characteristic events not included in our relation, are recollections still cherished in some parts of Kentucky, and made the theme of many a gleesome story.

The story of Wandering Nathan has a similar foundation in truth; but its origin belongs to one of the Western counties of Pennsylvania.

We owe, perhaps, some apology for the hues we have thrown around the Indian portraits in our picture,—hues darker than are usually employed by the painters of such figures. But, we confess, the North American savage has never appeared to us the gallant and heroic personage he seems to others. The single fact that he wages war—systematic war—upon beings incapable of resistance or defence,—upon women and children, whom all other races in the world, no matter how barbarous, consent to spare, has hitherto been, and we suppose, to the end of our days will remain, a stumbling-block to our imagination: we look into the woods for the mighty warrior, the 'feather-cinctured chief,' rushing to meet his foe, and behold him retiring, laden with the scalps of miserable squaws and their babes.—Heroical? *Hoc verbum quid valeat, non vident.*

NICK OF THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

PARADISE LOST.

IF we can believe the immortal poet from whom we have taken the above lines, to serve as our letter of introduction to the gentle reader, the grief of our first parents for the loss of Paradise was not so deep and overwhelming but that they almost immediately found comfort, when they reflected they had exchanged it for the land

of Eden, — itself a paradise though an earthly and unsanctified one :

Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon.

The Exiles of America, who first forsook their homes on the borders of the Atlantic to build their hearths among the deserts of the West, had a similar consolation; they were bending their steps towards a land, to which rumour at first, and afterwards the reports of a thousand adventurous visitants, had affixed the character of a second Elysium. The Dorado of the Spaniards, with its cities built of gold, its highways paved with diamonds and rubies, was not more captivating to the brains of Sir Walter Raleigh and his fellow freebooters of the sixteenth century, than was the KENTUCKY of the red men, with its fertile fields and ever-blooming forests, to the imaginations of their descendants, two hundred years after. It was not unnatural, indeed, that men should regard as an Eden the land in which the gallant Daniel Boone, while taking his "pleasing ramble" on the 22d of December, 1769, discovered "myriads

of trees, some gay with blossoms, others rich with fruits;" which blossoms and fruits, as he tells us, were "beautifully coloured, elegantly shaped, and charmingly flavoured."*

It might be difficult, in these degenerate days, to find fruits and flowers adorning any forest in Kentucky, at Christmas; yet there was enough, and more than enough, in the wild beauty and unexampled fertility of the country, to excuse the rapture of the hunter, and to warrant high expectations on the part of the eastern emigrants, to whom he had opened a path through the wilderness, which they were not slow to follow. A strong proof of the real attractions of the land was to be seen in the crowds rushing towards it, year after year, regardless of all adverse circumstances. Suffering and privation of all kinds were to be endured on the long and savage road, in which mountain, river, bog, and forest were to be passed, and often, too, in the teeth of

* See the worthy pioneer's "Adventures," purporting to be written by himself, though undoubtedly furbished up by some flowery friend.

a lurking foe; while peril of every imaginable aspect was still to be encountered, when the journey was at an end. The rich fields,—the hunting-grounds of a dozen tribes of Indians,—to be possessed, were first to be won, and won from an enemy at once brave and cruel, resolute and wily, who had shown no disposition to yield them except with life, and who had already stained them with the best blood of the settler. Such evils were well known to exist; but they imposed little check on the ardour of adventurers: the tide of emigration, at first a little rivulet, lost among forests, increased to a river, the river grew into a flood, overflowing the whole land; and, in 1792, sixteen years after the first block-house was built in the woods, the '*wilderness*' of Kentucky was admitted into the Federal Union, a free and sovereign State, with a population of seventy-five thousand souls.

Ten years before that happy event—for it is to this early period we must ask the attention of the reader,—the Shawanee and the Wyandot still hunted the bear and

buffalo in the cane-brake, and waylaid the settler at the gates of his solitary stronghold. The "District of Kentucky," then within the territorial jurisdiction of Virginia, comprised but three inhabited counties, Fayette, Jefferson, and Lincoln; of which, to play the geographer briefly, we need only say, that the first occupied all the country north and east of the Kentucky river; the second all the region west of that river as far as Green river, which, with the redoubtable Salt, the river of Roarers, formed also its southern bounds; while the third extended over all the territory lying south of the two others, and was therefore the first reached by emigrants coming from Virginia and the Carolinas through the Gap of the Cumberlands. In these counties, the settlements were already somewhat numerous, although confined, for the most part, to the neighbourhood of the *stations*, or forts, which were the only effectual places of refuge for the husbandman and his family, when the enemy was abroad in the land. These stations were mere assemblages of huts, sometimes in number ap-

proaching to villages, surrounded, or at least connected, hut to hut, by ranges of strong palisades, easily defended against assailants armed only with knives and rifles. Founded, in the first place, by some bold and resolute pioneer, each station, as the land filled with settlers, was enlarged to receive other inhabitants, who were glad to unite with the founder in defending from attack a place so necessary to their own safety, and easily conceded him a kind of military authority over them, which was usually confirmed by a commission from the State, on the division of the District into counties, and exercised with due military spirit, on all proper occasions.

The sun of an August afternoon, 1782, was yet blazing upon the rude palisades and equally rude cabins of one of the principal stations in Lincoln county, when a long train of emigrants, issuing from the southern forest, wound its way over the clearings, and among the waving maize-fields that surrounded the settlement, and approached the chief gate of its enclosure.

The party was numerous, consisting perhaps of seven or eight score individuals in all, men, women, and children, the last bearing that proportion to the others in point of numbers usually found in a borderer's family; and thus, with the help of pack-horses, cattle, and a few negroes, the property of the more wealthy emigrants, scattered here and there throughout the assemblage, giving to the whole train the appearance of an army, or moving village, of Vandals in quest of some new home to be won with the edge of the sword. Of the whole number there were at least fifty well armed; some of these, however, being striplings of fourteen, and, in one or two instances, even of twelve, who balanced the big rifle on their shoulders, or sustained it over their saddle-bows, with all the gravity and dignity of grown warriors; while some few of the negroes were provided with the same formidable weapons. In fact, the dangers of the journey through the wilderness required that every individual of a party should be well armed, who was at all capable of bearing arms; and

this was a kind of capacity which necessity instilled into the American frontiersman in the earliest infancy.

Of this armed force, such as it was, the two principal divisions, all well mounted, or at least provided with horses, which they rode or not as the humour seized them, were distributed in military order on the front and in the rear; while scouts leading in the van, and flanking-parties beating the woods on either side, where the nature of the country permitted, indicated still further the presence of a martial spirit on the part of the leaders. The women and children, stowed carefully away for the most part, with other valuable chattels, on the backs of pack-horses, were mingled with droves of cattle in the centre, many of which were made to bear burthens as well as the horses. Of wheeled carriages there was not a single one in the whole train, the difficulties of the road, which was a mere bridle-path, being such that they were never, at that early period, attempted to be brought into the country, unless when conveyed in boats down the Ohio.

Thus marshalled, and emerging from the depth of the forest into the clearings around the Station, there was something in the appearance of the train, wild, singular, and striking. The tall and robust frames of the men, wrapped in blanket-coats and hunting-frocks,—some of which, where the wearers were young and of gallant tempers, were profusely decked with fringes of yellow, green, and scarlet; the gleam of their weapons, and the tramp of their horses, gave a military air to the whole, typical, it might be supposed, of the sanguinary struggle by which alone the desert was to be won from the wandering barbarian; while the appearance of their families, with their domestic beasts, and the implements of husbandry, was in harmony with what might be supposed the future destinies of the land, when peaceful labour should succeed to the strife of conquest.

The exiles were already in the heart of their land of promise, and many within view of the haven where they were to end their wanderings. Smiles of pleasure

lighted their way-worn countenances, as they beheld the waving fields of maize and the gleam of the distant cabins; and their satisfaction was still further increased, when the people of the Station, catching sight of them, rushed out, some mounted and others on foot, to meet them, uttering loud shouts of welcome, such as, in that day, greeted every band of new-comers; and adding to the clamour of the reception a *feu-de-joie*, which they fired in honour of the numbers and martial appearance of the present company. The salutation was requited, and the stirring hurrahs returned by the travellers, most of whom pressed forward to the van in disorder, eager to take part in the merry-making ere it was over, or, perhaps, to seek for friends who had preceded them in the journey through the wilderness. Such friends were in many instances found, and their loud and affectionate greetings were mingled with the scarce less cordial welcomes extended by the colonists even to the unknown stranger. Such was the reception of the emigrants at that period and

in that country, where men were united together by a sense of common danger; and where every armed visitor, besides being an accession to the strength of the colonists, brought with him such news of absent friends and still remembered homes as was sure to recommend him to favour.

The only individual who, on this occasion of rejoicing, preserved a melancholy countenance, and who, instead of riding forward, like the others, to shake hands with the people of the Station, betrayed an inclination to avoid their greetings altogether, was a young man, who, from the position he occupied in the band, and from other causes, was entitled to superior attention. With the rank and nominal title of Second Captain,—a dignity conferred upon him by his companions, he was, in reality, the commander of the party, the ostensible leader being, although a man of good repute on the Virginia border, entirely wanting in the military reputation and skill which the other had acquired in the armies of the Republics, and of which the value was

fully appreciated, when danger first seemed to threaten the exiles on their march. He was a youth of scarce twenty-three years of age; but five of those years had been passed in camps and battles; and the labours, passions, and privations of his profession had antedated the period of manhood. A frame tall and athletic, a countenance which, although retaining the smoothness and freshness of youth, was yet marked with the manly gravity and decision of mature life, added, in appearance, at least six years to his age. He wore a hunting-frock of the plainest green colour, with cap and leggings of leather, such as were worn by many of the poorest or least pretending exiles; like whom also he bore a rifle on his shoulder, with the horn and other equipments of a hunter. There was little, therefore, to distinguish him, at the first view, from among his companions; although his erect military bearing, and the fine blooded bay horse which he rode, would have won him more than a passing look. The holsters at his saddle-bow, and the sabre at his side, were weapons not indeed

very generally worn by frontiersmen, but still common enough to prevent their being regarded as badges of rank.

With this youthful officer, the rear-guard, which he commanded, having deserted him to press forward to the van, there remained only three persons, two of whom were negro slaves, both mounted and armed, who followed at a little distance behind, leading thrice their number of pack-horses. The third was a female, who rode closely at his side, the rein of her pony being, in fact, grasped in his hand; though he looked as if scarce conscious that he held it,—a degree of insensibility that would have spoken little in his favour to an observer, for his companion was both young and beautiful, and watched his moody countenance on her part with looks of the most anxious and affectionate interest. Her riding-habit, chosen, like his own garments, with more regard to usefulness than beauty, and perhaps somewhat the worse for its encounters with the wind and forest, could not conceal the graceful figure it defended; nor had the sunbeam, though it had darkened

the bright complexion exposed to its summer fury, during a journey of more than six weeks, robbed her fair visage of a single charm. There was, in the general cast of features, a sufficient resemblance between the two to indicate near relationship; although it was plain that the gloom seated upon the brow of her kinsman, as if a permanent characteristic, was an unwelcome and unnatural visitant on her own. The clear blue eye, the golden locks floating over her temples, the ruddy cheek and lip of seventeen, and, generally, the frank and open character of her expression, betokened a spirit too joyous and elastic to indulge in those dark anticipations of the future or mournful recollections of the past, which clouded the bosom of her relative. And it was well for her that such was the cheerful temper of her mind; for, from her whole appearance, it was manifest that her lot, as originally cast, must have been among the gentle, the refined, and the luxurious, and that she was now, for the first time, exposed to discomfort, hardship, and suffering, among companions, who, however

kind in their conduct, were unpolished in their habits, conversation, and feelings, and in every other respect unfitted to be her associates.

She looked upon the face of her kinsman, and seeing that it grew the darker and gloomier the nearer they approached the scene of rejoicing, she laid her hand upon his arm, and murmured softly and affectionately,—

"Roland,—cousin,—brother!—what is it that disturbs you? Will you not ride forward, and salute the good people that are making us welcome?"

"Us!" muttered the young man with a bitter voice; "who is there on earth, Edith, to welcome us? Where shall *we* look for the friends and kinsfolk, that the meanest of the company are now finding among yonder noisy barbarians?"

"You do them injustice, Roland," said the maiden. "Yesternight we had experience at the Station we left, that these wild people of the woods do not confine their welcomes to kinsmen. Kinder and more hospitable people do not exist in the world."

"It is not that, Edith," said the young man; "I were but a brute to doubt their hospitality. But look, Edith; we are in Kentucky, almost at our place of refuge. Yonder hovels, lowly, mean, and wretched,—are they the mansions that should shelter the child of my father's brother? Yonder people, the outcasts of our borders, the poor, the rude, the savage,—but one degree elevated above the Indians, with whom they contend,—are they the society from whom Edith Forrester should choose her friends?"

"They are," said Edith, firmly; "and Edith Forrester asks none better. In such a cabin as these, and, if need be, in one still more humble, she is content to pass her life, and dream that she is still in the house of her fathers. From such people, too, she will choose her friends, knowing that even among the humblest of them, there are many worthy of her regard and affection. What have we to mourn in the world we have left behind us? We are the last of our name and race; fortune has left us nothing to regret. My only relation

on earth, saving yourself, Roland,—saving yourself, my cousin, my brother,"—her lip quivered, and, for a moment, her eyes were filled with tears,—" my only other living relation resides in this wilderness-land; and she, tenderly nurtured as myself, finds in it enough to engage her thoughts and secure her happiness. Why, then, should not I? Why should not *you?* Trust me, dear Roland, I should myself be as happy as the day is long, could I only know that you did not grieve for me."

" I cannot but choose it," said Roland. " It is to me you owe the loss of fortune and your present banishment from the world."

" Say not so, Roland, for it is not true: No! I never can believe that our poor uncle would have carried his resentment, for such a cause, so far. But supposing that he could, and granting that all were as you say, I am prouder to be the poor cousin of Roland Forrester, who has bled in the battles of his country, than if I were the rich and courted kinswoman of one who had betrayed the memory of his father."

"You are, at least, an angel;" said the youth; "and I am but a villain to say or do any thing to give you pain. Farewell then to Fell-hallow, to old James River, and all! If you can forget these things, Edith, so will I: at all events, I will try."

"Now," said Edith, "you talk like my true cousin."

"Well, Edith, the world is before us; and shame be upon me, if I, who have health, strength, and youth to back my ambition, cannot provide you a refuge and a home. I will leave you for a while in the hands of this good aunt at the Falls; and then, with old Emperor there for my adjutant, and Sam for my rank and file, I will plunge into the forest, and scatter it as I have seen a band of tories scattered by my old major, (who, by-the-bye, is only three years older than myself,) Henry Lee, not many years back. Then, when I have built me a house, furrowed my acres with my martial plough-share, (for to that, it appears, my sword must come,) and reaped my harvest with my own hands, (it will be

hard work to beat my horse-pistols into a sickle,) then, Edith——"

"Then, Roland," said the maiden, with a smile and a tear, "if you should still remember your poor cousin, it will not be hard to persuade her to follow you to your retreat, to share your fortunes of good and of evil, and to love you better in your adversity than she ever expected to love you in your prosperity."

"Spoken like my true Edith!" said the young officer, whose melancholy fled before her soft accents, as the evil spirit of Saul before the tinklings of the Jewish harp,—"spoken like my true Edith; for whom I promise, if fate smile upon my exertions, to rear a new Fell-hallow on the banks of the Ohio, in which I will be, myself, the first to forget that on James River. —And now, Edith, let us ride forward and meet yon gay looking giant, whom, from his bustling demeanour, and fresh jerkin, I judge to be the commander of the Station, the redoubtable Colonel Bruce himself."

As he spoke, the individual thus alluded to, separating himself from the throng, gal-

loped up to the speaker, and displayed a person which excited the envy even of the manly-looking Forrester. He was a man of at least fifty years, but as hale as one of thirty, without a single gray hair to deform the beauty of his raven locks, which fell down in masses nearly to his shoulders. His stature was colossal, and the proportions of his frame as just as they were gigantic; so that there was much in his appearance of real native majesty. Nothing, in fact, could be well imagined more truly striking and grand than his appearance, as seen at the first glance; though the second revealed a lounging indifference of carriage, amounting, at times, to something like awkwardness and uncouthness, which a little detracted from the effect. Such men were oft-times, in those days, sent from among the mountain counties of Virginia, to amaze the lesser mortals of the plains, who regarded them as the genii of the forest, and almost looked, as was said of the victor of the Kenhawa,* himself of

* Gen. Andrew Lewis.

the race, to see the earth tremble beneath their footsteps. With a spirit corresponding to his frame, he would have been the Nimrod, or Meleager, that he seemed. But nature had long before extinguished the race of demigods; and the worthy commander of the Station was not of them. He was a mortal man, distinguished by little, save his exterior, from other mortal men, and from the crowd of settlers who had followed him from the fortress. He wore, it is true, a new and janty hunting-shirt of dressed deer-skin, as yellow as gold, and fringed and furbelowed with shreds of the same substance, dyed as red as blood-root could make them; but was otherwise, to the view, a plain yeoman, endowed with those gifts of mind only which were necessary to his station, but with the virtues which are alike common to forest and city. Courage and hospitality, however, were then hardly accounted virtues, being too universal to be distinguished as such; and courtesy was equally native to the independent borderer.

He shook the young officer heartily by the hand, a ceremony which he instantly repeated with the fair Edith; and giving them to understand that he claimed them as his own especial guests, insisted, with much honest warmth, that old companionship in arms with one of their late nearest and dearest kinsmen had given him a double right to do so:——

"You must know," said he, "the good old Major, your uncle, the brave old Major Roly, as we called him, Major Roland Forrester:—well, K'yaptin,—well, young lady,—my first battle war foght under his command; and an excellent commander he war; it war on the bloody Monongahela, whar the Frenchmen and Injuns trounced us so promiskous. Perhaps you've h'ard him tell of Big Tom Bruce,—for so they called me then? I war a copporal in the first company of Rangers that crossed the river. Lord! how the world is turning upside down! I war a copporal then, and now I'm a k'-yunnel; a greater man in commission than war ever my old Major; and the Lord he knows, I

thought my old Major Forrester war the greatest man in all Virginee, next to the G'-yovernor, and K'-yunnel George Washington! Well, you must know, we marched up the g'yully that runs from the river; and bang went the Savages' g'-yuns, and smash went their hatchets; and then it came to close quarters, a regular rough-and-tumble hard scratch! And so I war a-head of the Major, and the Major war behind, and the fight had made him as ambitious* as a wild-cat, and he war hungry for a shot; and so says he to me, for I war right afore him, 'Git out of my way, you damned big rascal, till I git a crack at 'em!' And so I got out of his way, for I war mad at being called a damned big rascal, especially as I war doing my best, and covering him from mischief besides. Well! as soon as I jumped out of his way, bang went his piece, and bang went another, let fly by an Injun;—down went the Major, shot right through the hips, slam-bang. And so said I, 'Major,'—for I warn't well over my passion,—'if you'd

* *Ambitious*,—In Western parlance, vicious.

'a' taken things easy, I'd 'a' stopped that slug for you.' And so says he, 'Bang away you big fool, and don't stand talking.' And so he swounded away; and that made me ambitious too, and I killed two of the red niggurs, before you could say Jack Robinson, just by way of satisfaction for the Major; and then I helped to carry him off to the tumbrels. I never see'd my old Major from that day to this; and it war only a month ago that I h'ard of his death. I honour his memory; and so, K'-yaptain, you see, thar's a sort of claim to old friendship between us."

To this characteristic speech, which was delivered with great earnestness, Captain Forrester made a suitable response; and intimating his willingness to accept the proffered hospitality of his uncle's companion in arms, he rode forward with his host and kinswoman towards the Station, of which, when once fairly relieved from the forest, he had a clear view.

It was a quadrangle of stout pickets, firmly driven into the earth, on the brow of a knoll of very gentle ascent, with a

strong, though low block-house at each corner; and was sufficiently spacious to contain a double row of cabins, between which was a vacant area, as well as two others betwixt the cabins and the stockade; and thus afforded shelter not only for its defenders and their families, but for their cattle and horses, which were always driven in, if possible, when an attack was apprehended. A sense of security, arising from increase of numbers, and the absence of hostilities for a long period, had begot a contempt for the confined limits of the stockade; and a dozen or more of the settlers had built their cabins without the enclosure, on the slope of the hill, which had now assumed the appearance of a village; though one, it must be confessed, of exceedingly rude and primitive appearance. The houses were, in every instance, of logs, even to the chimneys; which being, therefore, of a combustible temper, notwithstanding the goodly daubing of clay with which they were plastered, were made to incline outwards from the perpendicular, so as to be detached from the building itself, as they

rose. By this arrangement, the dangers of a conflagration were guarded against; for when the burning of the chimney involved, as doubtless it often did, the wooden materials of the chimney itself, it was easy to tear it down before the flames communicated to the cabin.

Such was the appearance of a fortified settlement, at that time, one of the most prominent of all the stations in Kentucky; and when we repeat that the forest had vanished in its immediate vicinity, to make way for rich fields of corn,—that divers great gaps were, at a distance, seen in its massive green walls, where the tall oaks and walnuts, girdled and leafless, but not yet fallen, admitted the sunshine upon other crops as rich and as verdant,—and that all beyond and around was a dark and solemn wilderness, the tree-top aloft and the cane-break below, we have a proper idea of the aspect and condition of the lonely strongholds which succeeding years saw changed into towns and villages.

The Station seemed unusually populous, as, indeed, it was; but Roland, as he rode

by, remarked, on the skirts of the village, a dozen or more shooting-targets set up on the green, and perceived it was a gala-day which had drawn the young men from a distance to the fort. This, in fact, he was speedily told by a youth, whom the worthy Bruce introduced to him as his oldest son and namesake, 'big Tom Bruce,—the third of that name; the other two Toms,—for two others he had had,—having been killed by the Injuns, and he having changed the boy's name, that he might have a Tom in the family.' The youth was worthy of his father, being full six feet high, though scarcely yet out of his teens, and presented a visage of such serene gravity and good-humoured simplicity, as won the affections of the soldier in a moment.

"Thar's a boy now, the brute," said Colonel Bruce, sending him off to assist in the distribution of the guests among the settlers, "that comes of the best stock for loving women and fighting Injuns in all Kentucky! And so, captain, if young madam, your sister h'yar, is for picking a husband out of Kentuck, I'll say it, and

stand to it, thar's not a better lad to be found than Tom Bruce, if you hunt the district all over. You'd scarce believe it, mom," he continued, addressing Edith herself, "but the young brute did actually take the scalp of a full grown Shawnee, before he war fourteen y'ar old, and that in fa'r fight, whar thar war none to help him. The way of it war this: Tom war out in the range, looking for a neighbour's horse; when what should he see but two great big Shawnees astride of the identicular beast he war hunting! Away went Tom, and away went the bloody villians hard after, one of 'em afoot, the other on the horse. 'Now,' said Tom, 'this won't do, no how;' and so he let fly at the mounted feller; but being a little skeary, as how could he help it, the young brute, being the first time he ever banged at an Injun, he hit the horse, which dropped down in a flurry; and away comes the red devil over his head, like a rocket, eend on to a sapling. Up jumps Tom and picks up the Injun's gun; and bang goes the other Shawnee at him, and jumps to a tree. 'A bird

in the hand,' said Tom, 'is worth two in a bush;' and with that, he blows out the first feller's brains, just as he is gitting up, and runs into the fort, hard chased by the other. And then to see the feller, when I asked him why he did n't shoot the Injun that had fired at him, and so make sure of both, the other being in a sort of swound-like from the tumble, and ready to be knocked on the head at any moment? 'Lord!' said Tom, 'I never thought of it, I war such a fool!' and with that he blubbered all night, to think he had not killed them both Howsomever, I war always of opinion that what he had done war good work for a boy of fourteen.—But, come now, my lovely young mom; we are entering the Station. May you never enter a house where you are less welcome."

CHAPTER II.

Their talk, of course, ran most on the new comer.
DON JUAN.

The devil was in the girl! Could it be pride?
Or modesty, or absence, or inanity?
Heaven knows!
DON JUAN.

MEN and boys had rushed from the fortress together, to greet the new comers, and few remained save the women; of whom not a few, particularly of the younger individuals, were as eager to satisfy their curiosity as their fathers and brothers. The disorderly spirit had spread even among the daughters of the commandant, to the great concern of his spouse; who, although originally of a degree somewhat humbler even than his own, had a much more elevated sense of the dignity of his commission

as a colonel of militia, and a due consciousness of the necessity of adapting her manners to her rank. She stood on the porch of her cabin, which had the merit of being larger than any other in the fort, maintaining order among some half dozen or more lasses, the oldest scarce exceeding seventeen, whom she endeavoured to range in a row, to receive the expected guests in state, though every moment some one or other might be seen edging away from her side, as if in the act of deserting her altogether.

"Out on you, you flirting critturs!" said she, her indignation provoked, and her sense of propriety shocked by such unworthy behaviour:—"Stop thar, you Nell! whar you going? You Sally, you Phœbe, you Jane, and the rest of you! ha'nt you no better idea of what's manners for a Cunnel's daughters? I'm ashamed of you,—to run ramping and tearing after the strange men thar, like tom-boys, or any common person's daughters! Laws! *do* remember your father's a Cunnel in the milishy, and set down in the porch here on the bench,

like genteel young ladies; or stand up, if you like that better, and wait till your father, Cunnel Bruce that is, brings up the captains: one of 'em's a rale army captain, with epaulets and broad-sword, with a chance of money, and an uncommon handsome sister,—rale genteel people from old Virginnee: and I'm glad of it,—it's so seldom you sees any body but common persons come to Kentucky. Do behave yourselves: thar's Telie Doe thar at the loom don't think so much as turning her eyes around; she's a pattern for you."

"Law, mother!" said the eldest of the daughters, bridling with disdain, "I reckon I know how to behave myself as well as Telie Doe, or any other girl in the settlement;"—a declaration echoed and re-echoed by her sisters, all of whom bent their eyes towards a corner of the ample porch, where, busied with a rude loom, fashioned perhaps by the axe and knife of the militia colonel himself, on which she was weaving a coarse cloth from the fibres of the flax-nettle, sat a female somewhat younger than the oldest of the sisters, and

doubtless of a more humble degree, as was shown by the labour in which she was engaged, while the others seemed to enjoy a holyday, and by her coarse brown garments, worn at a moment when the fair Bruces were flaunting in their best bibs and tuckers, the same having been put on not more in honour of the exiles, whose coming had been announced the day before, than out of compliment to the young men of the settlement, who were wont to assemble on such occasions to gather the latest news from the States.

The pattern of good manners thus referred to, was as unconscious of the compliment bestowed upon her by the worthy Mrs. Bruce as of the glances of disdain it drew from the daughters, being apparently at that moment too much occupied with her work to think of any thing else; nor did she lift up her eyes until, the conversation having been resumed between the mother and daughters, one of the latter demanded, "What was the name of that army captain, that was so rich and great, of whom her mother had been talking?"

"Captain Roland Forrester," replied the latter; at the sound of which name the maiden at the loom started and looked up with an air of fright, that caused exceeding diversion among the others. "Look at Telie Doe!" they cried, laughing: "you can't speak above your breath but she thinks you are speaking to her; and, sure, you can't speak to her, but she looks as if she would jump out of her skin, and run away for her dear life!"

And so, indeed, the girl did appear for a moment, looking as wild and terrified as the animal whose name she bore, when the first bay of the deer-hound startles her in the deep woodland pastures, rolling her eyes, catching her breath convulsively, shivering, and, in short, betraying a degree of agitation that would have appeared unaccountable to a stranger; though, as it caused more amusement than surprise among the merry Bruces, it was but fair to suppose that it sprung from constitutional nervousness, or the sudden interruption of her meditations. As she started up in her confusion, rolling her eyes from one

laughing maiden to another, her very trepidation imparted an interest to her features, which were in themselves pretty enough, though not so much so as to attract observation, when in a state of rest. Then it was that the observer might see, or fancy he saw, a world of latent expression in her wild dark eyes, and trace the workings of a quick and sensitive spirit, whose existence would have been otherwise unsuspected, in the tremulous movement of her lips. And then, too, one might have been struck with the exquisite contour of a slight figure, which even the coarse garments, spun, and perhaps shaped, by her own hands, could not entirely conceal. At such times of excitement, there was something in her appearance both striking and singular,—Indian-like, one might almost have said. Such an epithet might have been borne out by the wildness of her looks, the darkness of her eyes, the simple arrangement of her coal-black hair, which, instead of being confined by comb or fillet, was twisted round a thorn cut from the nearest locust-tree, and by the smallness of her stature;

though the lightness and European tinge of her complexion must have instantly disproved the idea.

Her discomposure dispelled from the bosoms of her companions all the little resentment produced by the matron's invidious comparison; and each now did her best to increase it by cries of, "Jump, Telie, the Indians will catch you!" "Take care, Telie, Tom Bruce will kiss you!" "Run, Telie, the dog will bite you!" and other expressions of a like alarming nature, which, if they did not augment her terror, divided and distracted her attention, till, quite bewildered, she stared now on one, now on the other, and at each mischievous assault started, and trembled, and gasped for breath, in inexpressible confusion. It was fortunate for her that this species of baiting, which, from the spirit and skill with which her youthful tormentors pursued it, seemed no uncommon infliction, the reforming mother considered to be, at least at that particular moment, unworthy the daughters of a colonel in the militia.

"Do behave yourselves, you ungenteel critturs," said she; "Phœbe Bruce, you're old enough to know better; don't expose yourself before stranngers. Thar they come now; thar's Cunnel Bruce that is, talking to Captain Forrester that is, and a right-down soldier-looking Captain he is too. I wonder whar's his cocked hat, and feather, and goold epaulets. Thar's his big broad-sword, and—but Lord above us, arn't his sister a beauty! any man in Kentucky will be proud of her; but, I warrant me, she'll take to nothing under a cunnel!"

The young misses ceased their sport to stare at the strangers, and even Telie Doe, pattern of propriety as she was, had no sooner recovered her equanimity than she turned her eyes from the loom and bent them eagerly upon the train now entering through the main gate, gazing long and earnestly upon the young captain and the fair Edith, who, with the colonel of militia, and a fourth individual, parted from it, and rode up to the porch. The fourth person, a sober and substantial-looking borderer, in a huge blanket-coat and slouched hat, the latter

stuck round with bucks' tails, was the nominal captain of the party. He conversed a moment with Forrester and the commandant, and then, being given in charge by the latter to his son Tom, who was hallooed from the crowd for this purpose, he rode away, leaving the colonel to do the honours to his second in command. These the colonel executed with much courtesy and gallantry, if not with grace, leaping from his horse with unexpected activity, and assisting Edith to dismount, which he effected by taking her in his arms, and whisking her from the saddle with as little apparent effort as though he were handling an infant.

"Welcome, my beautiful young lady," said he, giving her another hearty shake of the hand: "H'yar's a house that shall shelter you; though thar's not much can be said of it, except that it is safe and wholesome. H'yar's my old lady too, and my daughters, that will make much of you; and as for my sons, thar's not a brute of 'em that won't fight for you; but th' ar' all busy stowing away the strangers; and

I reckon they think it ar'nt manners to show themselves to a young lady, while she's making acquaintance with the women."

With that the gallant colonel presented the fair stranger to his wife and daughters, the latter of whom, a little daunted at first by her appearance, as a being superior in degree to the ordinary race of mortals, but quickly reassured by her frank and easy deportment, loaded her with caresses, and carried her into the house, to improve the few hours allowed to make her acquaintance, and to assist her in changing her apparel, for which the means were furnished from sundry bags and packages, that the elder of the two negro-men, the only immediate followers of her kinsmen, took from the back of a pack-horse. The mother of the Bruces thought it advisable to follow them, to see, perhaps, in person, that they conducted themselves towards their guest as a colonel's daughter should.

None of the females remained on the porch save Telie, the girl of the loom, who, too humble or too timid to seek the

acquaintance of the stranger lady, like the others, had been overlooked in the bustle, and now pursued her labour with but little notice from those who remained.

"And now, colonel," said the young officer, declining the offer of refreshments made by his host, "allow me, like a true soldier, to proceed to the business with which you heard our commander, Major Johnson, charge me. To-morrow we resume our journey to the Falls. I should gladly myself, for Miss Forrester's sake, consent to remain with you a few days, to recruit our strength a little. But that cannot be. Our men are resolved to push on without delay; and, as I have no authority to restrain them, I must e'en accompany them."

"Well," said Colonel Bruce, "if it must be, it must, and I'm not the brute to say No to you. But lord, captain, I should be glad to have you stay a month or two, war it only to have a long talk about my old friend, the brave old major. And thar's your sister, captain,—lord, sir, she would be the pet of the family, and

would help my wife teach the girls manners. Lord!" he continued, laughing, "you've no idea what grand notions have got into the old woman's head about the way of behaving, ever since it war that the Governor of Virginnie sent me a cunnel's commission. She thinks I ought to w'ar a cocked hat and goold swabs, and put on a blue coat instead of a leather shirt; but I wonder how soon I'd see the end of it, out h'yar in the bushes? And then, as for the girls, why thar's no end of the lessons she gives them;—and thar's my Jenny, —that's the youngest,—came blubbering up the other day, saying, 'she believed mother intended even to stop their licking at the sugar-troughs, she was gitting so great and so proud!' Howsomever, women will be women, and thar's the end of it."

To this philosophic remark the officer of inferior degree bowed acquiescence, and recalling his host's attention to the subject of most interest to himself, requested to be informed what difficulties or dangers might be apprehended on the further route to the Falls of Ohio.

"Why, none on 'arth that I know of," said Bruce; "you've as cl'ar and broad a trace before you as man and beast could make—a buffalo-street* through the canes; and, when thar's open woods, blazes as thick as stars, and horse-tracks still thicker: thar war more than a thousand settlers have travelled it this year already. As for danngers, captain, why I reckon thar's none to think on. Thar war a good chance of whooping and howling about Bear's Grass, last year, and some hard fighting; but I h'ar nothing of Injuns thar this y'ar. But you leave some of your people h'yar: what force do you tote down to the Falls tomorrow?"

"Twenty-seven guns in all; but several quite too young to face an enemy."

"Thar's no trusting to years, in a matter of fighting!" said the Kentuckian: "Thar's my son Tom, that killed his brute at fourteen; but, I remember, I told you that story. Howsomever, I hold thar's no Injuns on the road; and if you should meet

* The bison-paths, when very broad, were often thus called.

any, why, it will be down about Bear's Grass, or the Forks of Salt, whar you can keep your eyes open, and whar the settlements are so thick, it is easy taking cover. No, no, captain, the fighting this year is all on the north side of Kentucky."

"Yet, I believe," said Roland, "there have been no troubles there since the defeat of Captain Estill on Little Mountain, and of Holder at that place,—what do you call it?"

"Upper Blue Licks of Licking," said Bruce; "and war'nt they troubles enough for a season? Two Kentucky captains (and one of them a south-side man, too,) whipped in fa'r fight, and by nothing better than brutish Injuns!"

"They were sad affairs, indeed; and the numbers of white men murdered made them still more shocking."

"The murdering," said the gallant Colonel Bruce, "is nothing, sir: it is the shame of the thumping that makes one feel ambitious; thar's the thing no Kentuckian can stand, sir. To be murdered, whar thar's ten Injuns to one white man, is nothing;

but whar it comes to being trounced by equal numbers, why thar's the thing not to be tolerated. Howsomever, captain, we're no worse off in Kentucky than our neighbours. Thar's them five hundred Pennsylvanians, that went out in June, under old Cunnel Crawford from Pittsburg, agin the brutes of Sandusky, war more ridiculously whipped by old Captain Pipe, the Delaware, thar's no denying."

"What!" said Roland, "was Crawford's company beaten?"

"Beaten!" said the Kentuckian, opening his eyes; "cut off the *b*, and say the savages made a dinner of 'em, and you'll be nearer the true history of the matter. It's but two months ago; and so I suppose the news of the affa'r had n't got into East Virginnie when you started. Well, captain, the long and short of it is,—the Cunnel *war* beaten and exterminated, and that on a hard run from the fight he had hunted hard after. How many ever got back safe again to Pittsburg, I never could rightly h'ar; but what I know is, that thar war dozens of prisoners beaten to death by the squaws

and children, and that old Cunnel Crawford himself war put to the double torture and roasted alive; and, I reckon, if he war'nt eaten, it war only because he war too old to be tender."

"Horrible!" said the young soldier, muttering half to himself, though not in tones so low but that the Kentuckian caught their import; "and I must expose my poor Edith to fall into the power of such fiends and monsters!"

"Ay, captain," said Bruce, "thar's the thing that sticks most in the heart of them that live in the wilderness and have wives and daughters;—to think of *their* falling into the hands of the brutes, who murder and scalp a woman just as readily as a man. As to their torturing them, that's not so certain, but the brutes are n't a bit too good for it; and I did h'ar of their burning one poor woman at Sandusky.* But now, captain, if you are anxious to have the

* The worthy Kentuckian was, perhaps, mistaken. A female captive from Pittsburg was, however, actually bound to the stake near the Sandusky villages, and rescued with difficulty by British traders. But this happened in 1790, eight years after the date of our story.

young lady, your sister, in safety, h'yar's the place to stick up your tent-poles, h'yar in this very settlement, whar the Injuns never trouble us, never coming within ten miles of us. Thar's as good land here as on Bear's Grass; and we shall be glad of your company. It is not often we have a rich man to take luck among us. Howsomever, I won't deceive you, if you will go to the Ohio; I hold, thar's no danger on the trace for either man or woman."

"My good friend," said Roland, "you seem to labour under two errors in respect to me, which it is fitting I should correct. In the first place, the lady whom you have several times called, I know not why, my sister, claims no such near relationship, being only my cousin."

"Why, sure!" said the colonel, "some one told me so, and thar's a strong family likeness."

"There should be," said the youth, "since our fathers were twin brothers, and resembled each other in all particulars, in body, in mind, and, as I may say, in fortune. They were alike in their lives,

alike also in their deaths: they fell together, struck down by the same cannon-ball, at the bombardment of Norfolk, seven years ago."

"May I never see a scalp," said the Kentuckian, warmly grasping the young man's hand, "if I don't honour you the more for boasting such a father and such uncles! You come of the true stock, captain, thar's no denying; and my brave old major's estates have fallen into the right hands; for, if thar's any believing the news the last band of emigrants brought of you here, thar war no braver officer in Lee's corps, nor in the whole Virginnie line, than young Captain Forrester."

"Here," said Roland, looking as if what he said cost him a painful effort, "lies the second error,—your considering me, as you manifestly do, the heir of your old major, my uncle Roland,—which I am *not*."

"Lord!" said the worthy Bruce, "he war the richest man in Prince George, and he had thousands of fat acres in the Valley, the best in all Fincastle, as I know very well, for I war a Fincastle man myself;

thar war my old friend Braxley,—he war a lieutenant under the major at Braddock's, and afterwards his steward, and manager, and lawyer-like,—who used to come over the Ridge, to see after them. But I see how it is; he left all to the young lady?"

"Not an acre," said Roland.

"What!" said the Kentuckian: "he left no children of his own. Who then is the heir?"

"Your old friend, as you called him, Richard Braxley.—And hence, you see," continued the youth, as if desirous to change the conversation, "that I come to Kentucky, an adventurer and fortune-hunter, like other emigrants, to locate lands under proclamation-warrants and bounty-grants, to fell trees, raise corn, shoot bisons and Indians, and, in general, to do any thing else that can be required of a good Virginian or good Kentuckian."

It was evidently the captain's wish now to leave altogether the subject on which he had thought it incumbent to acquaint his host with so much; but the worthy Bruce was not so easily satisfied; and not

conceiving there was any peculiar impropriety in indulging curiosity in matters relating to his old major, however distasteful that curiosity might prove to his guest, he succeeded in drawing from the reluctant young man many more particulars of his story; which, as they have an important connexion with the events it is our object to narrate, we must be pardoned for briefly noticing.

Major Roland Forrester, the uncle and godfather of the young soldier, and the representative of one of the most ancient and affluent families on James River, (for by this trivial name Virginians are content to designate the noble *Powhatan*,) was the eldest of three brothers, of whom the two younger, as was often the case under the *ancien régime* in Virginia, were left, at the death of their parent, to shift for themselves; while the eldest son inherited the undivided princely estate of his ancestors. This was at the period when that contest of principle with power, which finally resulted in the separation of the American Colonies from the parent State, first began

to agitate the minds of the good planters of Virginia, in common with the people of all the other colonies. Men had already begun to take sides, in feeling, as in argument; and, as usual, interest had, no doubt, its full share in directing and confirming the predilections of individuals.

These circumstances,—the regular succession of the eldest-born to the paternal estate, and the necessity imposed on the others of carving out their own fortunes,—had, perhaps, their influence in determining the political bias of the brothers, and preparing them for contention, when the increase of party feeling, and the clash of interests between the government abroad and the colonies at home, called upon all men to avow their principles and take their stands. It was as natural that the one should retain affection and reverence for the institutions which had made him rich and distinguished, as that the younger brothers, who had suffered under them a deprivation of their natural rights, should declare for a system of government and

laws more liberal and equitable in their character and operation.

At all events, and be the cause of difference what it might, when the storm of the revolution burst over the land, the brothers were found arrayed on opposite sides, the two younger, the fathers of Roland and Edith, instantly taking up arms in the popular cause, while nothing, perhaps, but helpless feebleness and bodily infirmities, the results of wounds received in Braddock's war, throughout which he had fought at the head of a battalion of "Buckskins," or Virginia Rangers, prevented the elder brother from arming as zealously in the cause of his king. Fierce, uncompromising, and vindictive, however, in his temper, he never forgave his brothers the bold and active part they both took in the contest; and it was his resentment, perhaps, more than natural affection for his neglected offspring, that caused him to defeat his brothers' hopes of succession to his estates, (he being himself unmarried,) by executing a will in favour of an illegitimate child, an infant daughter, whom he

drew from concealment and acknowledged as his offspring. This child, however, was soon removed, having been burned to death in the house of its foster-mother. But its decease effected little or no change in his feelings towards his brothers; who, pursuing the principles they had so early avowed, were among the first to take arms among the patriots of Virginia, and fell, as Roland had said, at Norfolk, leaving each an orphan child, Roland then a youth of fifteen, and Edith a child of ten, to the mercy of the elder brother.

Their death effected what perhaps their prayers never would have done. The stern loyalist took the orphans to his bosom, cherished and loved them, or at least appeared to do so, and often avowed his intention to make them his heirs. But it was Roland's ill fate to provoke his ire, as Roland's father had done before him. The death of that father, one of the earliest martyrs to liberty, had created in his youthful mind a strong abhorrence of every thing British and loyal; and after presuming a dozen times or more to dis-

close and defend his hatred, he put the coping-stone to his audacity, by suddenly leaving his uncle's house, two years after he had been received into it, and galloping away, a cornet in one of the companies of the first regiment of horse which Virginia sent to the armies of Congress.

He never more saw his uncle. He cared little for his wrath, or its effects; if disinherited himself, it pleased his imagination to think he had enriched his gentle cousin. But his uncle carried his resentment further than he had dreamed, or indeed any one else who had beheld the show of affection he continued to the orphan Edith, up to the last moment of his existence. He died in October of the preceding year, a week before the capitulation at York-town, and almost within the sound of the guns that proclaimed the fall of the cause he had so loyally espoused. From this place of victory Roland departed to seek his kinswoman. He found her in the house,—not of his fathers, but of a stranger,—herself a destitute and homeless orphan. No will appeared to pronounce her the mistress

of the wealth he had himself rejected; but, in place of it, the original testament in favour of Major Forrester's own child was produced by Braxley, his confidential friend and attorney, who, by it, was appointed both executor of the estate and trustee to the individual in whose favour it was constructed.

The production of such a testament, so many years after the death of the girl, caused no little astonishment; but this was still further increased by what followed, the aforesaid Braxley instantly taking possession of the whole estate in the name of the heiress, who, he made formal deposition, was, to the best of his belief, yet alive, and would appear to claim her inheritance. In support of this extraordinary averment, he produced, or professed himself ready to produce, evidence to show that Forrester's child, instead of being burned to death, as was believed, had actually been trepanned and carried away by persons to him unknown, the burning of the house of her foster-mother having been devised and executed merely to give colour to the story.

of her death. Who were the perpetrators of such an outrage, and for what purpose it had been devised, he affected to be ignorant; though he threw out many hints and surmises of a character more painful to Edith and Roland than even the loss of the property. These hints Roland could not persuade himself to repeat to the curious Kentuckian, since they went, in fact, to charge his own father, and Edith's, with the crime of having themselves concealed the child, for the purpose of removing the only bar to their expectations of succession.

Whatever might be thought of this singular story, it gained some believers, and was enough in the hands of Braxley, a man of great address and resolution, and, withal, a lawyer, to enable him to laugh to scorn the feeble efforts made by the impoverished Roland to bring it to the test of legal arbitrement. Despairing, in fact, of his cause, after a few trials had convinced him of his impotence, and perhaps himself almost believing the tale to be true, the young man gave up the contest, and directed his

thoughts to the condition of his cousin Edith; who, upon the above circumstances being made known, had received a warm invitation to the house and protection of her only female relative, a married lady, whose husband had, two years before, emigrated to the Falls of Ohio, where he was now a person of considerable importance.

This invitation determined the course to be pursued. The young man instantly resigned his commission, and converting the little property that remained into articles necessary to the emigrant, turned his face to the boundless West, and, with his helpless kinswoman at his side, plunged at once into the forest. A home for Edith in the house of a relative was the first object of his desires; his second, as he had already mentioned, was to lay the foundation for the fortunes of both, by locating lands on proclamation-warrants, as they were called, (being grants of western lands made to the colonists who had served the crown in the provincial French wars,) which the two had inherited from their fathers, besides the bounty-grants earned by himself in vir

tue of military service rendered in the army of his native state.

There was something in the condition of the young and almost friendless adventurers to interest the feelings of the hardy Kentuckian; but they were affected still more strongly by the generous self-sacrifice, as it might be called, which the young soldier was evidently making for his kinswoman, for whom he had given up an honourable profession, and his hopes of fame and distinction, to live a life of inglorious toil in the desert. He gave the youth another energetic grasp of hand, and said, with uncommon emphasis:—

"Hark'ee, Captain, my lad, I love and honour ye; and I could say no more if you war my own natteral born father! As to that 'ar' Richard Braxley, whom I call'd my old friend, you must know, it war an old custom I have of calling a man a friend who war only an acquaintance; for I am for being friendly to all men that are white and honest, and no Injuns. Now, I do hold that Braxley to be a rascal,—a precocious rascal, sir! and, I rather reckon, thar war

lying and villany at the bottom of that will; and I hope you'll live to see the truth of it."

The sympathy felt by the Kentuckian in the story was experienced in a still stronger degree by Telie Doe, the girl of the loom, who, little noticed, if at all, by the two, sat apparently occupied with her work, yet drinking in every word uttered by the young soldier with a deep and eager interest, until Roland by chance looking round, beheld her large eyes fastened upon him, with a wild, sorrowful look, of which, however, she herself seemed quite unconscious, that greatly surprised him. The Kentuckian observing her at the same time, called to her,—"What, Telie, my girl, are you working upon a holiday? You should be dressed like the others, and making friends with the strannger lady. And so git away with you now, and make yourself handsome, and don't stand thar looking as if the gentleman would eat you."

Upon being thus accosted, the girl exhibited much of the same terror and flurry of spirits that she had shewn on a previous

occasion; but obeying the order at last, she left the room and stole timorously into the house.

"A qu'ar crittur she, poor thing!" said Bruce, looking after her commiseratingly, "and a strannger might think her no more nor half-witted. But she has sense enough, poor crittur! and, I reckon, is just as smart, if she war not so humble and skittish, as any of my own daughters."

"What," said Roland, "is she not then your child?"

"No, no," replied Bruce, shaking his head, "a poor crittur of no manner of kin whatever. Her father war an old friend or acquaintance-like; for, rat it, I won't own friendship for any such apostatized villains, no how; but the man war taken by the Shawnees; and so as thar war none to befriend her, and she war but a little chit no bigger nor my hand, I took to her myself and raised her. But the worst of it is, and that's what makes her so wild and skeary, her father, Abel Doe, turned Injun himself, like Girty, Elliot, and the rest of them refugee scoundrels you've h'ard of,

Now *that's* enough, you see, to make the poor thing sad and frightful; for Abel Doe is a rogue, thar's no denying, and everybody hates and cusses him, as is but his due: and it's natteral, now she's growing old enough to be ashamed of him, she should be ashamed of herself too,—though thar's nothing but her father to charge against her, poor creatur'. A bad thing for her to have an Injunized father; for, if it warn't for him, I reckon my son Tom, the brute, would take to her, and marry her."

"Poor creature, indeed!" muttered Roland to himself, contrasting in thought the condition of this helpless and deserted girl with that of his own unfortunate kinswoman, and sighing to acknowledge that it was still more forlorn and pitiable.

His sympathy was, however, but short-lived, being interrupted on the instant by a loud uproar of voices from the gate of the stockade, sounding half in mirth, half in triumph; while the junior Bruce was seen approaching the porch, looking the very messenger of good news.

CHAPTER III.

What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put tricks on us with savages, and men of Inde?

SHAKSPEARE.

Here he comes, swelling like a turkey-cock.

SHAKSPEARE.

"WHAT's the matter, Tom Bruce?" said the father, eyeing him with surprise.

"Matter enough," responded the young giant, with a grin of mingled awe and delight; "the Jibbenainosay is up again!"

"Whar?" cried the senior eagerly, "not in our limits?"

"No, by Jehoshaphat!" replied Tom, "but nigh enough to be neighbourly,—on the north bank of Kentuck, whar he has left his mark right in the middle of the road, as fresh as though it war but the work of the morning!"

"And a clear mark, Tom?—no mistake in it?"

"Right to an iota!" said the young man; —"a reggelar cross on the breast, and a good tomahawk-dig right through the skull; and a long-legg'd fellow too, that looked as if he might have fou't old Sattan himself!"

"It's the Jibbenainosay, sure enough; and so good luck to him!" cried the commander; "thar's a harricane coming!"

"Who is the Jibbenainosay?" demanded Forrester.

"Who?" cried Tom Bruce; "why Nick, —Nick of the Woods."

"And who, if you please, is Nick of the Woods?"

"Thar," replied the junior with another grin, "thar strannger, you're too hard for me. Some think one thing, and some another, but thar's many reckon he's the devil."

"And his mark, that you were talking of in such mysterious terms,—what is that?"

"Why, a dead Injun, to be sure, with Nick's mark on him,—a knife-cut, or a brace of 'em, over the ribs in the shape of

a cross. That's the way the Jibbenainosay marks all the meat of his killing. It has been a whole year now since we h'ard of him."

"Captain," said the elder Bruce, "you don't seem to understand the affa'r altogether; but if you war to ask Tom about the Jibbenainosay till doomsday, he could tell you no more than he has told already. You must know, thar's a creatur' of some sort or other that ranges the woods round about our station h'yar, keeping a sort of guard over us like, and killing all the brute Injuns that ar' onlucky enough to come in his way, besides scalping them, and marking them with his mark. The Injuns call him *Jibbenainosay*, or a word of that natur', which them that know more about the Injun gabble than I do, say means the *Spirit-that-walks;* and, if we can believe any such lying devils as Injuns, (which I am loath to do, for the truth ar'nt in 'em,) he is neither man nor beast, but a great ghost or devil that knife cannot harm nor bullet touch; and they have always had an idea that our fort h'yar in partickelar,

and the country round about, war under his friendly protection—many thanks to him, whether he be a devil or not; for that war the reason the savages so soon left off a worrying of us."

"Is it possible," said Roland, "that any one can believe such an absurd story?"

"Why not," said Bruce, stoutly. "Thar's the Injuns themselves, Shawnees, Hurons, Delawares and all,—but particklarly the Shawnees, for he beats all creation a-killing of Shawnees,—that believe in him, and hold him in such eternal dread, that thar's scarce a brute of 'em has come within ten miles of the station h'yar, this three y'ar; because as how, he haunts about our woods h'yar in particklar, and he kills 'em wheresomever he catches 'em,—especially the Shawnees, as I said afore, against which the creatur' has a most butchering spite; and there's them among the other tribes that call him the *Shawneewannaween*, or the Howl of the Shawnees, because of his keeping them ever a howling. And thar's his marks, captain,—what do you make of *that*? When you find an Injun lying scalped

and tomahawked, it stands to reason thar war something to kill him?"

"Ay, truly," said Forrester; "but I think you have human beings enough to give the credit to, without referring it to a supernatural one."

"Strannger," said Big Tom Bruce the younger, with a sagacious nod, "when you kill an Injun yourself, I reckon,—meaning no offence—you will be willing to take all the honour that can come of it, without leaving it to be scrambled after by others. Thar's no man 'arns a scalp in Kentucky, without taking great pains to show it to his neighbours."

"And besides, captain," said the father, very gravely, "thar are men among us who have *seen* the creatur'!"

"*That*," said Roland, who perceived his new friends were not well pleased with his incredulity, "is an argument I can resist no longer."

"Thar war Ben Jones, and Samuel Sharp, and Peter Smalleye, and a dozen more, who all had a glimpse of him stalking through the woods, at different times;

and, they agree, he looks more like a devil nor a mortal man,—a great tall fellow with horns and a hairy head like a buffalo-bull, and a little devil that looks like a black b'ar, that walks before him to point out the way. He war always found in the deepest forests, and that's the reason we call him Nick of the Woods; wharby we mean *Old* Nick of the Woods; for we hold him to be the devil, though a friendly one to all but Injuns. Now, captain, I war never superstitious in my life,—but I go my death on the Jibbenainosay! I never seed the creatur' himself, but I have seen in my time two different savages of his killing. It's a sure sign, if you see him in the woods, that thar's Injuns at hand: and it's a good sign when you find his mark, without seeing himself; for then you may be sure the brutes are off,—they can't stand Old Nick of the Woods no how! At first, he war never h'ard of afar from our station; but he has begun to widen his range. Last year he left his marks down Salt River in Jefferson; and now, you see, he is striking game north of the Kentucky; and I have

h'ard of them that say he kills Shawnees even in their own country; though consarning *that* I'll not be so particklelar. No, no, captain, thar's no mistake in Nick of the Woods, and if you are so minded, we will go and h'ar the whole news of him. But, I say, Tom," continued the Kentuckian, as the three left the porch together, "who brought the news?"

"Captain Ralph, — Roaring Ralph Stackpole," replied Tom Bruce, with a knowing and humourous look.

"What!" cried the father, in sudden alarm; "Look to the horses, Tom!"

"I will," said the youth, laughing: "it war no sooner known that Captain Ralph were among us than it was resolved to have six Regulators in the range all night! Thar's some of these new colts, (not to speak of our own creaturs,) and especially that blooded brown beast of the captain's, which the nigger calls Brown Briery, or some such name, would set a better man than Roaring Ralph Stackpole's mouth watering."

"And who," said Roland, "is Roaring

Ralph Stackpole?' and what has he to do with Brown Briareus?"

"A proper fellow as ever you see!" replied Tom, approvingly; "killed two Injuns once, single-handed, on Bear-Grass, and has stolen more horses from them than ar another man in Kentucky. A prime creatur'! but he has his fault, poor fellow, and sometimes mistakes a christian's horse for an Injun's, thar's the truth of it!"

"And such scoundrels you make officers of?" demanded the soldier indignantly.

"Oh," said the elder Bruce, "thar's no reggelar commission in the case. But whar thar's a knot of our poor folks out of horses, and inclined to steal a lot from the Shawnees, (which is all fa'r plundering, you see, for thar's not a horse among them, the brutes, that they did not steal from Kentucky,) they send for Roaring Ralph and make him their Captain; and a capital one he is, too, being all fight from top to bottom; and as for the stealing part, thar's no one can equal him. But, as Tom says, he sometimes *does* make mistakes, having stolen horses so often from the Injuns, he

can scarce keep his hands off a christian's; and that makes us wrathy."

By this time the speakers had reached the gate of the fort, and passed among the cabins outside, where they found a throng of the villagers, surrounding the captain of horse-thieves, and listening with great edification to, and deriving no little amusement from, his account of the last achievement of the Jibbenainosay. Of this, as it related no more than the young Bruce had already repeated,—namely, that, while riding that morning from the north side, he had stumbled upon the corse of an Indian, which bore all the marks of having been a late victim to the wandering demon of the woods,—we shall say nothing: but the appearance and conduct of the narrator, one of the first, and perhaps the parent, of the race of men who have made Salt River so renowned in story, were such as to demand a less summary notice.

He was a stout, bandy-legged, broad-shouldered, and bull-headed tatterdemalion; ugly, mean, and villainous of look; yet with an impudent, swaggering, joyous self-

esteem traced in every feature and expressed in every action of body, that rather disposed the beholder to laugh than to be displeased at his appearance. An old blanket-coat, or wrap-rascal, once white, but now of the same muddy brown hue that stained his visage, and once also of sufficient length to defend his legs, though the skirts had long since been transferred to the cuffs and elbows, where they appeared in huge patches, covered the upper part of his body; while the lower boasted a pair of buckskin breeches and leather wrappers, somewhat its junior in age, but its rival in mud and maculation. An old round fur hat, intended originally for a boy, and only made to fit his head by being slit in sundry places at the bottom, thus leaving a dozen yawning gaps, through which, as through the chinks of a lattice, stole out as many stiff bunches of black hair, gave to the capital excrescence an air as ridiculous as it was truly uncouth, which was not a little increased by the absence on one side of the brim, and by a loose fragment of it hanging down on the other.

To give something martial to an appearance in other respects so outlandish and ludicrous, he had his rifle, and other usual equipments of a woodsman, including the knife and tomahawk, the first of which he carried in his hand, swinging it about at every moment, with a vigour and apparent carelessness well fit to discompose a nervous person, had any such happened among his auditors.

As if there was not enough in his figure, visage, and attire to move the mirth of beholders, he added to his other attractions a variety of gestures and antics of the most extravagant kinds, dancing, leaping and dodging about, clapping his hands and cracking his heels together, with the activity, restlessness, and, we may add, the grace, of a jumping-jack.

Such was the worthy, or unworthy, son of Salt River, a man wholly unknown to history, though not to local and traditionary fame, and much less to the then inhabitants of Bruce's Station, to whom he related his news of the Jibbenainosay with that emphasis and importance of tone and manner

which are most significantly expressed in the phrase of 'laying down the law.'

As soon as he saw the commander of the Station approaching, he cleared the throng around him by a skip and a hop, seized the colonel by the hand, and doing the same with the soldier, before Roland could repel him, as he would have done, exclaimed, "Glad to see you, cunnel;—same to you, strannger——What's the news from Virginnie? Strannger, my name's Ralph Stackpole, and I'm a ring-tailed squealer!"

"Then, Mr. Ralph Stackpole, the ring-tailed squealer," said Roland, disengaging his hand, "be so good as to pursue your business without regarding or taking any notice of me."

"'Tarnal death to me!" cried the captain of horse-thieves, indignant at the rebuff, "I'm a gentleman, and my name's *Fight!* Foot and hand, tooth and nail, claw and mud-scraper, knife, gun, and tomahawk, or any other way you choose to take me, I'm your man! Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

And with that, the gentleman jumped

into the air, and flapped his wings, as much to the amusement of the provoker of his wrath as of any other person present.

"Come, Ralph," said the commander of the station, "whar'd you steal that brown mar' thar?"—a question whose abruptness somewhat quelled the ferment of the man's fury, while it drew a roar of laughter from the lookers-on.

"Thar it is!" said he striking an attitude and clapping a hand on his breast, like a man who felt his honour unjustly assailed. "Steal! *I* steal any horse but an Injun's! Whar's the man dar's insinivate that? Blood and massacree-ation! whar's the man?"

"H'yar," said Bruce, very composedly. "I know that old mar' belongs to Peter Harper, on the north side."

"You're right, by Hooky!" cried Roaring Ralph: at which seeming admission of his knavery the merriment of the spectators was greatly increased; nor was it much lessened when the fellow proceeded to aver that he had borrowed it, and that with the express stipulation that it should

be left at Bruce's Station, subject to the orders of its owner.

"Thar, cunnel," said he, "thar's the beast; take it; and just tell me whar's the one you mean to lend me,—for I must be off afore sunset."

"And whar are you going?" demanded Bruce.

"To St. Asaph's,"—which was a station some twenty or thirty miles off,—replied Captain Stackpole.

"Too far for the Regulators to follow, Ralph," said Colonel Bruce; at which the young men present laughed louder than ever, and eyed the visiter in a way that seemed both to disconcert and offend him.

"Cunnel," said he, "you're a man in authority, and my superior officer; wharfo' thar' can be no scalping between us. But my name's Tom Dowdle, the rag-man!" he screamed, suddenly skipping into the thickest of the throng, and sounding a note of defiance; "my name's Tom Dowdle, the rag-man, and I'm for any man that insults me! log-leg or leather-breeches, green-shirt or blanket-coat, land-trotter

or river-roller,—I'm the man for a massacree!"

Then giving himself a twirl upon his foot that would have done credit to a dancing-master, he proceeded to other antic demonstrations of hostility, which, when performed in after years on the banks of the Lower Mississippi, by himself and his worthy imitators, were, we suspect, the cause of their receiving the name of the mighty alligator. It is said, by naturalists, of this monstrous reptile, that he delights, when the returning warmth of spring has brought his fellows from their holes, and placed them basking along the banks of a swampy lagoon, to dart into the centre of the expanse, and challenge the whole field to combat. He roars, he blows the water from his nostrils, he lashes it with his tail, he whirls round and round, churning the water into foam; until having worked himself into a proper fury, he darts back again to the shore, to seek an antagonist.

Had the gallant captain of horse-thieves boasted the blood, as he afterwards did the name, of an 'alligator half-breed,'

he could have scarce conducted himself in a way more worthy of his parentage. He leaped into the centre of the throng, where, having found elbow-room for his purpose, he performed the gyration mentioned before, following it up by other feats expressive of his hostile humour. He flapped his wings and crowed, until every chanticleer in the settlement replied to the note of battle; he snorted and neighed like a horse; he bellowed like a bull; he barked like a dog; he yelled like an Indian; he whined like a panther; he howled like a wolf, until one would have thought he was a living menagerie, comprising within his single body the spirit of every animal noted for its love of conflict.

Not content with such a display of readiness to fight the field, he darted from the centre of the area allowed him for his exercise, and invited the lookers-on individually to battle. "Whar's your buffalo-bull," he cried, "to cross horns with the roarer of Salt River? Whar's your full-blood colt that can shake a saddle off? h'yar's an old nag can kick off the top of

a buck-eye! Whar's your cat of the Knobs? your wolf of the Rolling Prairies? h'yar's the old brown b'ar can claw the bark off a gum-tree! H'yar's a man for you, Tom Bruce! Same to you, Sim Roberts! to you, Jimmy Big-nose! to you, and to you, and to you! Ar'n't I a ring-tailed squealer? Can go down Salt on my back, and swim up the Ohio! Whar's the man to fight Roaring Ralph Stackpole?"

Now, whether it happened that there were none present inclined to a contest with such a champion, or whether it was that the young men looked upon the exhibition as a mere bravado, meant rather to amuse them than to irritate, it so occurred that not one of them accepted the challenge; though each, when personally called on, did his best to add to the roarer's fury, if fury it really were, by letting off sundry jests in relation to borrowed horses and Regulators.*

* It is scarcely necessary to inform the reader, that by this term must be understood those public-spirited citizens, amateur Jack-Ketches, who administer Lynch-law, in the United States, in districts where regular law is but inefficiently, or not at all, established.

That the fellow's rage was in great part assumed, Roland, who was, at first, somewhat amused at his extravagance, became soon convinced; and growing at last weary of it, he was about to signify to his host an inclination to return into the fort, when the appearance of another individual on the ground suddenly gave promise of new entertainment.

CHAPTER IV.

Here's a large mouth indeed,
That spits forth death, and mountains, rocks and seas;
Talks as familiarly of roaring lions
As maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs!
What cannoneer begot this lusty blood?
He speaks plain cannon, fire, and smoke, and bounce;
He gives the bastinado with his tongue;
Our *ears* are cudgell'd.

KING JOHN.

"IF you're ralely ripe for a fight, Roaring Ralph," cried Tom Bruce the younger, who had shown, like the others, a greater disposition to jest than to do battle with the champion, "here comes the very man for you. Look, boys, thar comes Bloody Nathan!" At which formidable name there was a loud shout set up, with an infinite deal of laughing and clapping of hands.

"Whar's the feller?" cried Captain Stackpole, springing six feet into the air, and uttering a whoop of anticipated triumph. "I've heerd of the brute, and 'tarnal death to me, but I'm his super-superior! Show me the crittur, and let me fly! Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

"Hurrah for Roaring Ralph Stackpole!" cried the young men, some of whom proceeded to pat him on the back in compliment to his courage, while others ran forward to hasten the approach of the expected antagonist.

The appearance of the comer, at a distance, promised an equal match to the captain of horse-thieves; but Roland perceived, from the increase of merriment among the Kentuckians, and especially from his host joining heartily in it, that there was more in Bloody Nathan than met the eye. And yet there was enough in his appearance to attract attention, and to convince the soldier that if Kentucky had shown him, in Captain Stackpole, one extraordinary specimen of her inhabitants, she had others to exhibit not a whit less

remarkable. It is on the frontiers, indeed, where adventurers from every corner of the world, and from every circle of society, are thrown together, that we behold the strongest contrasts, and the strangest varieties, of human character.

Casting his eyes down the road or street (for it was flanked by the outer cabins of the settlement, and perhaps deserved the latter name), which led, among stumps and gullies, from the gate of the stockade to the bottom of the hill, Forrester beheld a tall man approaching, leading an old lame white horse, at the heels of which followed a little silky-haired black or brown dog, dragging its tail betwixt his legs, in compliment to the curs of the station, which seemed as hospitably inclined to spread a field of battle for the submissive brute, as their owners were to make ready another for its master.

The first thing that surprised the soldier in the appearance of the person bearing so formidable a name, was an incongruity which struck others, as well as himself, even the colonel of militia exclaiming, as

he pointed it out with his finger, "It's old Nathan Slaughter, to the back-bone! Thar he comes, the brute, leading a horse in his hand, and carrying his pack on his own back! But he's a marciful man, old Nathan, and the horse thar, old White Dobbin, war foundered and good for nothing ever since the boys made a race with him against Sammy Parker's jackass."

As he approached yet nearer, Roland perceived that his tall, gaunt figure was arrayed in garments of leather from top to toe, even his cap or hat (for such it seemed, having several broad flaps suspended by strings, so as to serve the purpose of a brim), being composed of fragments of tanned skins rudely sewed together. His upper garment differed from a hunting-shirt only in wanting the fringes usually appended to it, and in being fashioned without any regard to the body it encompassed, so that, in looseness and shapelessness, it looked more like a sack than a human vestment; and, like his breeches and leggings, it bore the marks of the most reverend antiquity, being covered with

patches and stains of all ages, sizes, and colours.

Thus far Bloody Nathan's appearance was not inconsistent with his name, being uncommonly wild and savage; and to assist in maintaining his claims to the title, he had a long rifle on his shoulder, and a knife in his belt, both of which were in a state of dilapidation worthy of his other equipments; the knife, from long use and age, being worn so thin that it seemed scarce worth the carrying; while the rifle boasted a stock so rude, shapeless, and, as one would have judged from its magnitude and weight, so unserviceable, that it was easy to believe it had been constructed by the unskilful hands of Nathan himself.

Such, then, was the appearance of the man who seemed so properly to be called the Bloody: but when Roland came to survey him a little more closely, he could not avoid suspecting that the soubriquet, instead of being given to indicate warlike and dangerous traits of character, had been bestowed out of pure wantonness and derision. His visage, seeming to belong to a

man of at least forty-five or fifty years of age, was hollow, and almost as weather-worn as his apparel, with a long hooked nose, prominent chin, a wide mouth exceedingly straight and pinched, with a melancholy or contemplative twist at the corners, and a pair of black staring eyes, that beamed a good-natured, humble, and perhaps submissive, simplicity of disposition. His gait too, as he stumbled along up the hill, with a shuffling, awkward, hesitating step, was more like that of a man who apprehended injury and insult, than of one who possessed the spirit to resist them. The fact, moreover, of his sustaining on his own shoulders a heavy pack of deer and other skins, to relieve the miserable horse which he led, betokened a merciful temper, scarcely compatible with the qualities of a man of war and contention. Another test and criterion by which Roland judged his claims to the character of a roarer, he found in the little black dog; for the Virginian was a devout believer, as we are ourselves, in that maxim of practical philsophers—namely, that by the dog you

shall know the master, the one being fierce, magnanimous, and cowardly, just as his master is a bully, a gentleman, or a dastard. The little dog of Bloody Nathan was evidently a coward, creeping along at White Dobbin's heels, and seeming to supplicate with his tail, which now draggled in the mud, and now attempted a timid wag, that his fellow-curs of the station should not be rude and inhospitable to a peaceable stranger.

On the whole, the appearance of the man was any thing in the world but that of the bulky and ferocious ruffian whom the nick-name had led Roland to anticipate; and he scarcely knew whether to pity him, or to join in the laugh with which the young men of the settlement greeted his approach. Perhaps his sense of the ridiculous would have disposed the young soldier to merriment; but the wistful look, with which, while advancing, Nathan seemed to deprecate the insults he evidently expected, spoke volumes of reproach to his spirit, and the half-formed smile faded from his countenance.

"Thar!" exclaimed Tom Bruce, slapping Stackpole on the shoulder, with great glee, "thar's the man that calls himself Dannger! At him, for the honour of Salt River; but take care of his fore-legs, for, I tell you, he's the Pennsylvany war-horse!"

"And ar'n't I the ramping tiger of the Rolling Fork?" cried Captain Ralph; "and can't I eat him, hoss, dog, dirty jacket, and all? Hold me by the tail, while I devour him!"

With that, he executed two or three escapades, demivoltes, curvets, and other antics of a truly equine character, and galloping up to the amazed Nathan, saluted him with a neigh so shrill and hostile that even White Dobbin pricked up his ears, and betrayed other symptons of alarm.

"Surely, Colonel," said Roland, "you will not allow that mad ruffian to assail the poor man?"

"Oh," said Bruce, "Ralph won't hurt him; he's never ambitious, except among Injuns and horses. He's only for skearing the old feller."

"And who!" said Forrester, "may the

old fellow be? and why do you call him Bloody Nathan?"

"We call him Bloody Nathan," replied the commander, "because he's the only man in all Kentucky that *won't fight!* and thar's the way he beats us all hollow. Lord, Captain, you'd hardly believe it, but he's nothing more than a poor Pennsylvany Quaker; and what brought him out to Kentucky, whar thar's nar another creatur' of his tribe, thar's no knowing. Some say he war dishonest, and so had to cut loose from Pennsylvany; but I never heard of his stealing any thing in Kentucky: I reckon thar's too much of the chicken about him for that. Some say he is hunting rich lands; which war like enough for any body that war not so poor and lazy. And some say his wits are unsettled, and I hold that that's the truth of the creatur'; for he does nothing but go wandering up and down the country, now h'yar and now thar, hunting for meat and skins; and that's pretty much the way he makes a living; and once I see'd the creatur' have a fit,—a right up-and-down touch of the falling

sickness, with his mouth all of a foam. Thar's them that's good-natur'd, that calls him Wandering Nathan, because of his being h'yar, and thar, and every whar. He don't seem much afear'd of the Injuns; but, they say, the red brutes never disturbs the Pennsylvany Quakers. Howsomever, he makes himself useful; for sometimes he finds Injun sign whar thar's no Injuns thought of, and so he gives information; but he always does it, as he says, to save bloodshed, not to bring on a fight. He comes to me once, thar's more than three years ago, and instead of saying 'Cunnel, thar's twenty Injuns lying on the road at the lower ford of Salt, whar you may nab them;' he says, says he, 'Friend Thomas, thee must keep the people from going nigh the ford, for thar's Injuns thar that will hurt them;' and then he takes himself off; whilst I rides down thar with twenty-five men and exterminates them, killing six, and driving the others the Lord knows whar. He has had but a hard time of it among us, poor creatur'; for it used to make us wrathy to find thar war so little fight in

him, that he wouldn't so much as kill a murdering Injun. I took his gun from him once; for why, he wouldn't attend muster, when I had enrolled him. But I pitied the brute; for he war poor, and thar war but little corn in his cabin, and nothing to shoot meat with; and so I gave it back, and told him to take his own ways for an old fool."

While Colonel Bruce was thus delineating the character of Nathan Slaughter, the latter found himself surrounded by the young men of the station, the butt of a thousand jests, and the victim of the insolence of the captain of horse-thieves. It is not to be supposed that Roaring Ralph was really the bully and madman that his extravagant freaks and expressions seemed to proclaim him. These, like any other "actions that a man might play," were assumed, partly because it suited his humour to be fantastic, and partly because the putting of his antic disposition on, was the only means which he, like many of his betters, possessed of attracting attention, and avoiding the neglect and contempt to which his

low habits and appearance would have otherwise justly consigned him. There was, therefore, little really hostile in the feelings with which he approached the non-combatant; though it was more than probable, the disgust he, in common with the other warlike personages, entertained towards the peaceable Nathan, might have rendered him a little more malicious than usual.

"Bloody Nathan!" said he, as soon as he had concluded his neighing and curvetting, "if you ever said your prayers, now's the time. Down with your pack,—for I can't stand deer's ha'r sticking in my swallow, no how!"

"Friend," said Bloody Nathan, meekly, "I beg thee will not disturb me. I am a man of peace and quiet."

And so saying, he endeavoured to pass onwards; but was prevented by Ralph, who seizing his heavy bundle with one hand, applied his right foot to it with a dexterity that not only removed it from the poor man's back, but sent the dried skins scattering over the road. This feat was re-

warded by the spectators with loud shouts, all which, as well as the insult itself, Nathan bore with exemplary patience.

"Friend," he said, "what does thee seek of me, that thee treats me thus?"

"A fight!" replied Captain Stackpole, uttering a war-whoop; "a fight, strannger, for the love of heaven!"

"Thee seeks it of the wrong person," said Nathan; "and I beg thee will get thee away."

"What!" said Stackpole, "ar'nt thee the Pennsylvanny war-horse, the screamer of the meeting-house, the bloody-mouthed b'ar of Yea-Nay-and-Verily?"

"I am a man of peace," said the submissive Slaughter.

"Yea verily, verily, and yea!" cried Ralph, snuffling through the nostrils, but assuming an air of extreme indignation; "Strannger, I've heerd of you! You're the man that holds it agin duty and conscience to kill Injuns, the red-skin screamers,—that refuses to defend the women, the splendiferous creaturs! and the little children, the squall-a-baby d'ars! And

wharfo'? Bec'ause as how you're a man of peace and no fight, you superiferous, long-legged, no-souled, crittur! But I'm the gentleman to make a man of you. So down with your gun, and 'tarnal death to me, I'll whip the cowardly devil out of you."

"Friend," said Nathan, his humility yielding to a feeling of contempt, "thee is theeself a cowardly person, or thee wouldn't seek a quarrel with one, thee knows, can't fight thee. Thee would not be so ready with thee match."

With that, he stooped to gather up his skins, a proceeding that Stackpole, against whom the laugh was turned by this sally of Nathan's, resisted by catching him by the nape of the neck, twirling him round, and making as if he really would have beaten him.

Even this the peaceful Nathan bore without anger or murmuring; but his patience fled, when Stackpole, turning to the little dog, which by bristling its back and growling, expressed a half inclination to take up its master's quarrel, applied his

foot to its ribs with a violence that sent it rolling some five or six yards down the hill, where it lay for a time yelping and whining with pain.

"Friend!" said Nathan, sternly, "thee is but a dog theeself, to harm the creature! What will thee have with me?"

"A fight! a fight, I tell thee!" replied Captain Ralph, "till I teach thy leatherified conscience the new doctrines of Kentucky."

"Fight thee, I cannot and dare not," said Nathan; and then added, much to the surprise of Forrester, who, sharing his indignation at the brutality of his tormentor, had approached to drive the fellow off.—"But if thee must have thee deserts, thee *shall* have them.—Thee prides theeself upon thee courage and strength—will thee adventure with me a friendly fall?"

"Hurrah for Bloody Nathan!" cried the young men, vastly delighted at his unwonted spirit, while Captain Ralph himself expressed his pleasure, by leaping into the air, crowing, and dashing off his hat, which he kicked down the hill with as much good

will as he had previously bestowed upon the little dog.

"Off with your leather night-cap, and down with your rifle," he cried, giving his own weapon into the hands of a looker-on, "and scrape some of the grease off your jacket; for, 'tarnal death to me, I shall give you the Virginny lock, fling you head-fo'most, and you'll find yourself, in a twinkling, sticking fast right in the centre of the 'arth!"

"Thee may find theeself mistaken," said Nathan, giving up his gun to one of the young men, but instead of rejecting his hat, pulling it down tight over his brows. "There is locks taught among the mountains of Bedford, that may be as good as them learned on the hills of Virginia.—I am ready for thee."

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" cried Ralph Stackpole, springing towards his man, and clapping his hands, one on Nathan's left shoulder, the other on his right hip: "Are you ready?"

"I am," replied Nathan.

"Down then, you go, war you a buf-

falo!" And with that the captain of horse-thieves put forth his strength, which was very great, in an effort that appeared to Roland quite irresistible; though, as it happened, it scarce moved Nathan from his position.

"Thee is mistaken, friend!" he cried, exerting his strength in return, and with an effect that no one had anticipated. By magic, as it seemed, the heels of the captain of horse-thieves were suddenly seen flying in the air, his head aiming at the earth, upon which it as suddenly descended with the violence of a bomb-shell; and there it would doubtless have burrowed, like the aforesaid implement of destruction, had the soil been soft enough for the purpose, or exploded into a thousand fragments, had not the shell been double the thickness of an ordinary skull.

"Huzza! Bloody Nathan for ever!" shouted the delighted villagers.

"He has killed the man," said Forrester; "but bear witness, all, the fellow provoked his fate."

"Thanks to you, strannger! but not so

dead as you reckon," said Ralph, rising to his feet, and scratching his poll, with a stare of comical confusion. "I say, strannger, here's my shoulders,—but whar's my head?—Do you reckon I had the worst of it?"

"Huzza for Bloody Nathan Slaughter! He has whipped the ramping tiger of Salt River;" cried the young men of the station.

"Well, I reckon he has," said the magnanimous Captain Ralph, picking up his hat: then walking up to Nathan, who had taken his dog into his arms, to examine into the little animal's hurts, he cried, with much good-humoured energy,—"Thar's my fo'-paw, in token I've had enough of you, and want no mo'. But I say, Nathan Slaughter," he added, as he grasped the victor's hand, "it's no thing you can boast of, to be the strongest man in Kentucky, and the most sevagarous at a tussel,—h'yar among murdering Injuns and scalping runnegades, and keep your fists off their topknots. Thar's my idear: for I go for the doctrine, that every able-bodied man should

sarve his country and his neighbours, and fight their foes; and them that does is men and gentlemen, and them that don't is cowards and rascals, that's my idear. And so, fawwell."

Then, executing another demivolte or two, but with much less spirit than he had previously displayed, he returned to Colonel Bruce, saying, "Whar's that horse you promised me, cunnel? I'm a licked man, and I can't stay here no longer, no way no how. Lend me a hoss, cunnel, and trust to my honour."

"You shall have a beast," said Bruce, coolly; "but as to trusting your honour, I shall do no such thing, having something much better to rely on. Tom will show you a horse; and, remember, you are to leave him at Logan's. If you carry him a step further, captain, you'll never carry another. Judge Lynch is looking at you; and so bewar'."

Having uttered this hint, he left the captain of horse-thieves to digest it as he might, and stepped up to Nathan, who had seated himself on a stump, where, with his

skins at his side, his little dog and his rifle betwixt his legs, he sat enduring a thousand sarcastic encomiums on his strength and spirit, with as many sharp denunciations of the peaceful principles that robbed the community of the services he had shown himself so well able to render.

The doctrine, so eloquently avowed by Captain Ralph, that it was incumbent upon every able-bodied man to fight the enemies of their little state, the murderers of their wives and children, was a canon of belief imprinted on the heart of every man in the district; and Nathan's failure to do so, however caused by his conscientious aversion to bloodshed, no more excused him from contempt and persecution in the wilderness, than it did others of his persuasion in the Eastern republics, during the war of the revolution. His appearance, accordingly, at any station, was usually the signal for reproach and abuse; the fear of which had driven him almost from the society of his fellow-men, so that he was seldom seen among them, except when impelled by necessity, or when his wander-

ings in the woods had acquainted him with the proximity of the foes of his persecutors. His victory over the captain of horse-thieves exposed him, on this occasion, to ruder and more angry remonstrances than usual; which having sought in vain to avert, he sat down in despair, enduring all in silence, staring from one to another of his tormentors with lack-lustre eyes, and playing with the silken hair of his dog. The approach of the captain of the station procured him an interval of peace, which he, however, employed only to communicate his troubles to the little cur, that, in his perplexity, he addressed pretty much as he would have addressed a human friend and adviser: "Well, Peter," said he, abstractedly, and with a heavy sigh, "what does *thee* think of matters and things?" To which question, the ridiculousness of which somewhat mollified the anger of the young men, Peter replied by rubbing his nose against his master's hand, and by walking a step or two down the hill, as if advising an instant retreat from the inhospitable station.

"Ay, Peter," muttered Nathan, "the sooner we go the better; for there are none that make us welcome. But nevertheless, Peter, we must have our lead and our powder; and we must tell these poor people the news."

"And pray, Nathan," said Colonel Bruce, rousing him from his meditations, "what may your news for the poor people be? I reckon it will be much wiser to tell it to me than that 'ar brute dog. You have seen the Jibbenainosay, perhaps, or his mark thar-away on the Kentucky?"

"Nay," said Nathan. "But there is news from the Injun towns of a great gathering of Injuns with their men of war in the Miami villages, who design, the evil creatures, marching into the district of Kentucky with a greater army than was ever seen in the land before."

"Let them come, the brutes," said the Kentuckian, with a laugh of scorn; "it will save us the trouble of hunting them up in their own towns."

"Nay," said Nathan, "but perhaps they *have* come; for the prisoner who es-

caped, and who is bearing the news to friend Clark, the General at the Falls, says they were to march two days after he fled from them."

"And whar did you learn this precious news?"

"At the lower ford of Kentucky, and from the man himself," said Nathan. "He had warned the settlers at Lexington—"

"That's piper's news," interrupted one of the young men. "Captain Ralph told us all about that; but he said thar war nobody at Lexington believed the story."

"Then," said Nathan, meekly, "it may be that the man was mistaken. Yet persons should have a care, for there is Injun sign all along the Kentucky. But that is my story. And now, friend Thomas, if thee will give me lead and powder for my skins, I will be gone, and trouble thee no longer."

"It's a sin and a shame to waste them on a man who only employs them to kill deer, b'ar, and turkey," said Bruce; "yet a man must n't starve, even whar he's a quaker. So go you along with my son

Dick thar, to the store, and he'll give you the value of your plunder.—A poor, miserable brute, thar's no denying," he continued, contemptuously, as Nathan, obeying the direction, followed Bruce's second son into the fortress. "The man has some spirit now and then; but whar's the use of it, while he's nothing but a no-fight quaker? I tried to reason him out of his notions; but thar war no use in trying, no how I could work it. I have an idea about these quakers——"

But here, luckily, the worthy Colonel's idea was suddenly put to flight by the appearance of Telie Doe, who came stealing through the throng, to summon him to his evening meal,—a call which neither he nor his guest was indisposed to obey; and taking Telie by the hand in a paternal manner, he ushered the young soldier back into the fort.

The girl, Roland observed, had changed her attire at the bidding of her protector, and now, though dressed with the greatest simplicity, appeared to more advantage than before. He thought her, indeed, quite

handsome, and pitying her more than orphan condition, he endeavoured to show her such kindness as was in his power, by addressing to her some complimentary remarks, as he walked along at her side. His words, however, only revived the terror she seemed really to experience, whenever any one accosted her; seeing which, he desisted, doubting if she deserved the compliment the benevolent Bruce had so recently paid to her good sense.

CHAPTER V.

Then let me go, and hinder not my course:
I'll be as patient as a gentle stream,
And make a pastime of each weary step.
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE evening meal being concluded, and a few brief moments devoted to conversation with her new friends, Edith was glad, when, at a hint from her kinsman, as to the early hour appointed for setting out on the morrow, she was permitted to seek the rest of which she stood in need. Her chamber—and, by a rare exercise of hospitality, the merit of which she appreciated, since she was sensible it could not have been made without sacrifice, she occupied it alone—boasted few of the luxuries, few even of the comforts, to which she had been accustomed in her native land, and her

father's house. But misfortune had taught her spirit humility; and the recollection of nights passed in the desert with only a thin mattress betwixt her and the naked earth, and a little tent cloth and the boughs of trees to protect her from the inclement skies, caused her to regard her present retreat with such feelings of satisfaction as she might have indulged if in the chamber of a palace.

She was followed to the apartment by a bevy of the fair Bruces, all solicitous to render her such assistance as they could, and all, perhaps, equally anxious to indulge their admiration, for the second or third time, over the slender store of finery which Edith good-naturedly opened to their inspection. In this way the time fled amain, until Mrs. Bruce, more considerate than her daughters, and somewhat scandalized by the loud commendations which they passed on sundry articles of dress such as were never before seen in Kentucky, rushed into the chamber and drove them manfully away.

"Poor, ignorant critturs!" said she, by

way of apology, "they knows no better: thar's the mischief of being raised in the back-woods. They'll never l'arn to be genteel, thar's so many common persons comes out here with their daughters. I'm sure I do my best to l'arn 'em."

With these words she tendered her own good offices to Edith, which the young lady declining with many thanks, she bade her good night, and, to Edith's great relief, left her to herself. A few moments then sufficed to complete her preparations for slumber, which being effected, she threw herself on her knees, to implore the further favour of the orphan's Friend, who had conducted her so far in safety on her journey.

Whilst thus engaged, her mind absorbed in the solemn duty, she failed to note that another visitor had softly stolen into the apartment; and accordingly, when she rose from her devotions, and beheld a female figure standing in the distance, though regarding her with both reverence and timidity, she could not suppress an exclamation of alarm.

"Do not be afraid,—it is only Telie

Doe," said the visitor with a low and trembling voice: "I thought you would want some one to—to take the candle."

"You are very good," replied Edith, who, having scarcely before observed the humble and retiring maid, and supposing her to be one of her host's children, had little doubt she had stolen in to indulge her curiosity like the others, although at so late a moment as to authorize a little cruelty on the part of the guest. "I am very tired and sleepy," she said, creeping into bed, hoping that the confession would be understood and accepted as an apology. She then, seeing that Telie did not act upon the hint, intimated that she had no further occasion for the light, and bade her good-night. But Telie, instead of departing, maintained her stand at the little rude table, where, besides the candle, were several articles of apparel that Edith had laid out in readiness for the morning, and upon which she thought the girl's eyes were fixed.

"If you had come a little earlier," said Edith, with unfailing good-nature, "I should have been glad to show you any

thing I have. But now, indeed, it is too late, and all my packages are made up—"

"It is not *that*, interrupted the maiden hastily, but with trepidation. "No, I did not want to trouble you. But——"

"But what?" demanded Edith, with surprise, yet with kindness, for she observed the agitation of the speaker.

"Lady," said Telie, mustering resolution, and stepping to the bed-side, "if you will not be angry with me, I would,—I would——"

"You would ask a favour, perhaps?" said Edith, encouraging her with a smile.

"Yes, that is it," replied the girl, dropping on her knees, not so much, however, as it appeared, from abasement of spirit, as to bring her lips nearer to Edith's ear, that she might speak in a lower voice. "I know, from what they say, you are a great lady, and that you once had many people to wait upon you; and now you are in the wild woods, among strangers, and none about you but men." Edith replied with a sigh, and Telie, timorously grasping at the hand lying nearest her own, murmured

eagerly. "If you would but take *me* with you, I am used to the woods, and I would be your servant."

"*You!*" exclaimed Edith, her surprise getting the better of her sadness. "Your mother would surely never consent to your being a servant?"

"My mother?" muttered Telie,—"I have no mother,—no relations."

"What! Mr. Bruce is not then your father?"

"No,—I have no father. Yes,—that is, I have a father; but he has,—he has turned Indian."

These words were whispered rather than spoken, yet whispered with a tone of grief and shame that touched Edith's feelings. Her pity was expressed in her countenance, and Telie, reading the gentle sympathy infused into every lovely feature, bent over the hand she had clasped, and touched it with her lips.

"I have told you the truth," she said, mournfully: "one like me should not be ashamed to be a servant. And so, lady, if you will take me, I will go with you and

serve you; and, poor and ignorant as I am, I *can* serve you,—yes, ma'am," she added eagerly, "I can serve you more and better than you think,—indeed, indeed I can."

"Alas, poor child," said Edith, "I am one who must learn to do without attendance and service. I have no home to give you."

"I have heard it all," said Telie; "but I can live in the woods with you, till you have a house; and then I can work for you, and you'll never repent taking me,—no, indeed, for I know all that's to be done by a woman in a new land, and you don't; and indeed, if you have none to help you, it would kill you, it would indeed: for it is a hard, hard time in the woods for a woman that has been brought up tenderly."

"Alas, child," said Edith, perhaps a little pettishly, for she liked not to dwell upon such gloomy anticipations, "why should you be discontented with the home you have already?—Surely, there are none here unkind to you?"

"No," replied the maiden, "they are very good to me, and Mr. Bruce has been

a father to me. But then I am *not* his child, and it is wrong of me to live upon him, who has so many children of his own. And then my father—all talk of my father; all the people here hate him, though he has never done them harm, and I know,—yes, I know it well enough, though they won't believe it,—that he keeps the Indians from hurting them; but they hate him and curse him; and, oh! I wish I was away, where I should never hear them speak of him more. Perhaps they don't know any thing about him at the Falls, and then there will be nobody to call me the white Indian's daughter."

"And does Mr. Bruce, or his wife, know of your desire to leave him?"

"No," said Telie, her terrors reviving; "but if you should ask them for me, then they would agree to let me go. He told the Captain,—that's Captain Forrester,—he would do any thing for him; and indeed he would, for he is a good man, and he will do what he says."

"How strange, how improper, nay, how ungrateful then, if he be a good man," said

Edith, "that you should wish to leave him and his kind family, to live among persons entirely unknown. Be content, my poor maid. You have little save imaginary evils to afflict you. You are happier here than you can be among strangers."

Telie clasped her hands in despair; "I shall never be happy here, nor any where. But take me," she added eagerly, "take me for your own sake;—for it will be good for you to have me with you in the woods, it will, indeed it will."

"It cannot be," said Edith, gently.

But the maiden would scarce take a refusal. Her terrors had been dissipated by her having ventured so far on speech, and she now pursued her object with an imploring and passionate earnestness that both surprised and embarrassed Edith, while it increased her sympathy for the poor bereaved pleader. She endeavoured to convince her, if not of the utter folly of her desires, at least of the impossibility there was on her part of granting them. She succeeded, however, in producing conviction only on one point: Telie perceived

that her suit was not to be granted; of which, as soon as she was satisfied, she left off entreaty; and rose to her feet with a saddened and humbled visage, and then, taking up the candle, she left the fair stranger to her repose.

In the meanwhile, Roland also was preparing for slumber; and finding, as indeed he could not avoid seeing, that the hospitality of his host had placed the males of the family under the necessity of taking their rest in the open air on the porch, he insisted upon passing the night in the same place in their company. In fact, the original habitation of the back-woodsman seldom boasted more than two rooms in all, and these none of the largest; and when emigrants arrived at a Station, there was little attempt made to find shelter for any save their women and children, to whom the men of the settlement readily gave up their own quarters, to share those of their male visitors under the blanket-tents which were spread before the doors. This, to men who had thus passed the nights for several weeks in succession, was any thing

but hardship; and when the weather was warm and dry, they could congratulate themselves on sleeping in greater comfort than their sheltered companions.

Of this Forrester was well aware, and he took an early period to communicate his resolution of rejecting the unmanly luxury of a bed, and sleeping like a soldier, wrapped in his cloak, with his saddle for a pillow. In this way, the night proving unexpectedly sultry, he succeeded in enjoying more delightful and refreshing slumbers than blessed his kinswoman in her bed of down. The song of the katydid and the cry of the whip-poor-will came more sweetly to his ears from the adjacent woods; and the breeze that had stirred a thousand leagues of forest in its flight, whispered over his cheek with a more enchanting music than it made among the chinks and crannies of the wall by Edith's bed-side. A few idle dreams,—recollections of home, mingled with the anticipated scenes of the future, the deep forest, the wild beast, and the lurking Indian,—amused, without harassing, his sleeping mind; and it was not

until the first gray of dawn that he experienced any interruption.

He started up suddenly, his ears still tingling with the soft tones of an unknown voice, which had whispered in them, "Cross the river by the Lower Ford,—there is danger at the Upper."

He stared around, but saw nothing; all was silent around him, save the deep breathing of the sleepers at his side.

"Who spoke?" he demanded in a whisper, but received no reply. "River,—Upper and Lower Ford;—danger?—" he muttered: "now I would have sworn some one spoke to me: and yet I must have dreamed it. Strange things, dreams,—thoughts in freedom loosed from the chains of association,—temporary mad-fits undoubtedly: marvellous impressions they produce on the organs of sense; see, hear, smell, taste, touch, more exquisitely *without* the organs than *with* them—What's the use of organs? There's the poser—I think,—I—" but here he ceased thinking altogether, his philosophy having served the purpose such philosophy usually does, and

wrapped him a second time in the arms of Morpheus. He opened his eyes almost immediately, as he thought; but his morning nap had lasted half an hour; the dawn was already purple and violet in the sky, his companions had left his side, and the hum of voices and the sound of footsteps in and around the station, told him that his fellow exiles were already preparing to resume their journey.

"A brave morrow to you, captain!" said the commander of the fortress, the thunder of whose footsteps, as he approached the house with uncommonly fierce strides, had, perhaps, broken his slumbers. A frown was on his brow, and the grasp of his hand, in which every finger seemed doing the duty of a boa-constrictor, spoke of a spirit up in arms, and wrestling with passion.

"What is the matter?" asked Roland.

"Matter that consarns you and me more than any other two persons in the etarnal world!" said Bruce, with such energy of utterance as nothing but rage could supply. "Thar has been a black wolf in the

pin-fold,—*alias*, as they used to say at the court-house, Captain Ralph Stackpole; and the end of it is, war I never to tell another truth in my life, that your blooded brown horse has absquotulated!"

"*Absquotulated!*" echoed Forrester, amazed as much at the word as at the fierce visage of his friend,—"What is that? Is the horse hurt?"

"Stolen away, sir, by the etarnal Old Scratch! Carried off by Roaring Ralph Stackpole, while I, like a brute, war sound a-sleeping! And h'yar's the knavery of the thing, sir! the unpronounceable rascality, sir!—I loaned the brute one of my own critturs, just to be rid of him, and have him out of harm's way; for I had a forewarning, the brute, that his mouth war a-watering after the new beasts in the pin-fold, and after the brown horse in particklar! And so I loaned him a horse, and set him off to Logan's. Well, sir, and what does the brute do but ride off, for a make-believe, to set us easy; for he knew, the brute, if he war in sight of us, we should have had guards over the cattle all night

long; well, sir, down he sot in ambush, till all war quiet; and then he stole back, and turning my own horse among the others, as if to say, 'Thar's the beast that I borrowed,'—it war a wonder the brute war so honest!—picked the best of the gathering, your blooded brown horse, sir! and all the while, I war sleeping like a brute, and leaving the guest in my own house to be robbed by Captain Ralph Stackpole, the villian!"

"If it be possible to follow the rascal," said Roland, giving way to wrath himself, "I must do so, and without a moment's delay. I would to heaven I had known this earlier."

"Whar war the use," said Bruce; "whar war the use of disturbing a tired man in his nap, and he a guest of mine too?"

"The advantage would have been," said Roland, a little testily, "that the pursuit could have been instantly begun."

"And war it *not*?" said the colonel. "Thar war not two minutes lost after the horse war missing, afore my son Tom and

a dozen more of the best woodsmen war mounted on the fleetest horses in the settlement, and galloping after, right on the brute's trail."

"Thanks, my friend," said Roland, with a cordial grasp of hand, "the horse will be recovered?"

"Thar's no denying it," said Bruce, "if a fresh leg can outrun a weary one: and besides, the brute war not content with the best horse, but he must have the second best too, that's Major Smalleye's two-y'ar-old pony. He has an eye for a horse, the eternal skirmudgeon! but the pony will be the death of him; for he's skeary, and will keep Ralph slow in the path. No, sir, we'll have your brown horse before you can say Jack Robinson. But the intolerability of the thing, sir, is that Ralph Stackpole should steal my guest's horse, sir! But it's the end of his thieving, the brute, or thar's no snakes! I told him Lynch war out, the brute, and I told the boys to take car' I war not found lying; and I reckon they won't forget me! I like the crittur, thar's no denying, for he's a screamer

among Injuns; but thar's no standing a horse-thief! no, sir, thar's no standing a horse-thief!"

The only evil consequence of this accident which was apprehended, was that the march of the exiles must be delayed until the soldier's horse was recovered, or Roland himself left behind until the animal was brought in; unless, indeed, he chose to accept another freely offered him by his gallant host, and trust to having his own charger restored on some future occasion. He was himself unwilling that the progress of more than a hundred human beings towards the long-sighed-for land of promise should be delayed a moment on his account; and for this reason he exhorted his nominal superior to hasten the preparations for departure, without thinking of him.

His first resolution in relation to his own course, was to proceed with the company, leaving his horse to be sent after him, when recovered. He was loath, however, to leave the highly-prized and long-tried charger behind; and Colonel Bruce taking ad-

vantage of the feeling, and representing the openness and safety of the road, the shortness of the day's journey (for the next station at which the exiles intended lodging was scarcely twenty miles distant), and above all, promising, if he remained, to escort him thither with a band of his young men, to whom the excursion would be but an agreeable frolic, the soldier changed his mind, and in an evil hour, as it afterwards appeared, consented to remain until Brown Briareus was brought in, provided this should happen before mid-day; at which time, if the horse did not appear, it was agreed he should set out, trusting to his good fortune and the friendly zeal of his host, for the future recovery and restoration of his charger. Later than mid-day he was resolved not to remain; for, however secure the road, it was wiser to pursue it in company than alone; nor would he have consented to remain a moment, had there appeared the least impediment to his joining the companions of his exile before night-fall.

His measures were taken accordingly.

His baggage-horses, under the charge of the younger of the two negroes, were sent on with the band; the other, an old and faithful slave of his father, being retained as an useful appendage to a party containing his kinswoman, from whom he, of course, saw no reason to be separated. To Edith herself the delay was far from being disagreeable. It promised a gay and cheerful gallop through the forest, instead of the dull, plodding, funeral-like march to which she had been day after day monotonously accustomed. She assented, therefore, to the arrangement, and, like her kinsman, beheld, in the fresh light of sunrise, without a sigh, without even a single foreboding of evil, the departure of the train of emigrants, with whom she had journeyed in safety so many long and weary leagues through the desert.

They set out in high spirits, after shaking hands with their hosts at the gates, and saluting them with cheers, which they repeated in honour of their young captain; and, in a few moments, the whole train had vanished, as if swallowed up by the dark forest.

CHAPTER VI.

A fearful army rages
Upon our territories; and have already
O'erborne their way, consumed with fire, and took
What lay before them.

CORIOLANUS.

WITHIN an hour after the emigrants had set out, the sky, which had previously been clear and radiant, began to be overcast with clouds, dropping occasional rains, which Roland scarcely observed with regret, their effect on the sultry atmosphere being highly agreeable and refreshing. They continued thus to fall at intervals until nine o'clock, when Roland, as he sat on the porch debating with Bruce the probabilities of their continuance, was roused by a shout from the outer village, and, looking up, he beheld, to his great delight,

Richard Bruce, the second son of his host, a lad of sixteen, ride into the inclosure, leading in triumph his recovered charger.

"Thar's the brute, strannger!" said he, with uncommon glee: "he war too hard a hoss for Ralph's riding; and, I reckon, if he had n't been, you would n't have had him so easy, for he's a peeler at run, trot, or gallop, he is, I tell you! It's bad luck for Stackpole to be flung by man and beast two days hand-running,—first by Bloody Nathan, then by a stolen crittur!"

"And whar *is* the brute Stackpole? and what have you done with him?" demanded Bruce.

"Thar, father, you're too hard for me," replied the youth; "but I'll tell you all I know on it.—You need n't look at his legs, captain, for they're all as sound as hickory: the crittur's a bit worried with his morning's work; but that's nothing to speak on."

The lad's story was soon told. The track of the horse-thief had been followed through the woods; and it was soon seen, from it's irregularity, that he had made an unlucky

selection of beasts, both being so restive and rebellious, that it was obvious he had found it no easy matter to urge them along. A place was found where he appeared to have been thrown by the turbulent Briareus, which he seemed afterwards to have pursued, mounted on the pony, in the vain hope of retaking the mettlesome charger, until persuaded of his inability, or afraid, from the direction in which the animal had fled, of being led back again to the settlement. His track, after abandoning the chase, was as plain as that left by the war-horse, and was followed by the main body of pursuers; while Richard and two or three others, taking the latter, had the good fortune to find and recover the animal as he was solacing himself, after his morning adventures, in a grassy wood, scarce two miles from the station. What had become of Stackpole the lad knew not, but had no doubt, as he added, with a knowing look, "that Lynch's boys would soon give a good account of him; for Major Smalleye war as mad as a beaten b'ar about the two-y'ar-old pony."

"Well," said the father, "I reckon the brute will deserve all he may come by; and thar's no use in mourning him. Thar's as good Injun-fighters as he left in Kentucky, thar's the comfort; and thar's no denying, men will be much easier about their horses."

With this consoling assurance, in which Roland saw implied the visitation of the deadliest vengeance on the head of the offender, Bruce proceeded to congratulate him on the recovery of Brown Briareus, and to intimate his readiness, after the animal had been allowed a little rest, which it evidently needed, to marshal his band of young men, and conduct him on his way after the exiles. But fate willed that the friendly intention should never be put into execution, and that the young soldier should go forth on his pilgrimage unattended and unprotected.

Within the space of half an hour, the clouds, which seemed previously to have discharged all their moisture, collected into a dense canopy, darkening the whole heaven, and rumbling with thunder, that be-

came every moment louder and heavier. Then came gusts of wind, groaning through the forest, rattling among the dead limbs of the girdled trees, and whistling over the palisades of the fort. These were succeeded by louder peals of thunder, and vivid flashes of lightning, which continued and increased, until the tempest, for such it was, burst in fury, discharging deluges of rain, that fell with unintermitting violence until an hour or more after midday.

This was a circumstance, which, as it necessarily deferred the moment of his setting out, caused Forrester a little uneasiness; but he soon came to believe he had reason to congratulate himself on its occurrence, since it was scarce possible the band would continue their journey in such a storm; and, indeed, Bruce was of opinion that the day's march would be ended on the banks of the river,—one of the principal forks of the Salt,—but little more than ten miles from his station; where, if the exiles were wise, they would pitch their camp, waiting for the subsidence of the

waters. This was a point that Roland might be expected to reach in a ride of three or four hours at most; which consideration not only satisfied him under the delay, but almost made him resolve to defer his setting out until the following morning, that his kinswoman might have the advantage of sleeping a second time under the shelter of a roof, rather than be compelled to exchange it for the chill and humid forest.

It was while he was balancing this thought in his mind, and watching with a gladdened eye the first flash of sunshine, breaking through the parted clouds, that a shout, louder than that which had proclaimed the recovery of his steed, but of a wild and mournful character, arose from the outer village, and a horseman, covered with mud, reeking with rain, and reeling in the saddle with fatigue and exhaustion, rode into the fort, followed by a crowd of men, women, and children, all testifying, by their looks and exclamations, that he was the bearer of alarming news. And such indeed he was, as was shown by the

first words he answered in reply to Bruce's demand "what was the matter?"

"There are a thousand Indians," he said, "Shawnees, Delawares, Wyandots, Miamies,—all the tribes of the North,—laying siege to Bryant's station, and perhaps at this moment they are burning and murdering at Lexington. Men, Colonel Bruce! send us all your men, without a moment's delay; and send off for Logan, and his forces; despatch some one who can ride, for I can sit a horse no longer."

"Whar's Dick Bruce?" cried the Kentuckian; and the son answering, he continued, "Mount the roan long-legs, you brute, and ride to St. Asaph's in no time. Tell Cunnel Logan what you h'ar; and add, that before he can draw girth, I shall be, with every fighting-man in my fort, on the north side of Kentucky. Ride, you brute, ride for your life; and do you take car' *you* come along with the Cunnel; for it's time you war trying your hand at an Injun top-knot. Ride, you brute, ride!"

"Wah—wah—wah—wah!" whooped the boy, like a young Indian, flying to

obey the order, and exulting in the expectation of combat.

"Sound horn, you Samuel Sharp!" cried the father. "You, Ben Jones, and some more of you, ride out and rouse the settlements; and, some of you, hunt up Tom Bruce and the Regulators: it war a pity they hanged Ralph Stackpole, for he fights Injuns like a wolverine. Tell all them that ar'n't ready to start, to follow at a hard gallop, and join me at the ford of Kentucky; and them that can't join me thar, let them follow to Lexington; and them that don't find me thar, let them follow to Bryant's, or to any-whar whar thar's Injuns! Hurrah, you brutes! whar's your guns and your horses? your knives and your tomahawks? If thar's a thousand Injuns, or the half of 'em, thar's meat for all of you. Whar's Ikey Jones, the fifer? Let's have Yankee-Doodle and the Rogue's March; for, by the etarnal Old Scratch, all them white-men that ar'n't a-horse-back in twenty-five minutes, are rogues worse than red Injuns!—Hurrah for Kentucky!"

The spirit of the worthy officer of militia infused animation into all bosoms; and in an instant, the settlement, late so peaceful, resounded with the hum and uproar of war-like preparation. Horses were caught and saddled, rifles pulled from their perches, knives sharpened, ammunition-pouches and provender-bags filled, and every other step taken necessary to the simple equipment of a border army, called to action in an emergency so sudden and urgent.

In the meanwhile, the intelligence was not without its effects on Roland Forrester, who, seeing himself so unexpectedly deprived of the promised escort,—for he could scarce think, under such circumstances, of withdrawing a single man from the force called to a duty so important,—perceived the necessity of employing his own resources to effect escape from a position which he now felt to be embarrassing. He regretted, for the first time, his separation from the band of emigrants, and became doubly anxious to follow them: for, if it were true that so large a force of Indians was really in the District, there was every

reason to suppose they would, according to their known system of warfare, divide into small parties, and scatter over the whole country, infesting every road and path; and he knew not how soon some of them might be found following on the heels of the messenger. He took advantage of the first symptom of returning serenity on the part of his host, to acquaint him with his resolution to set out immediately, the rains having ceased, and the clouds broken up and almost vanished.

"Lord, captain," said the Kentuckian, "I hoped you would have been for taking a brush with us; and it war my idea to send a messenger after your party, in hopes your men would join us in the rusty. Whar will they have such another chance? A thousand Injuns ready cut and dried for killing! Lord, what a fool I war for not setting more store by that tale of Nathan Slaughter's! I never knowed the brute to lie in such a case; for, as he is always ramping about the woods, he's as good as a paid scout. Howsomever, the crittur did'nt speak on his own knowledge; and

that infarnal Stackpole was just ripe from the North side. But, I say, captain, if your men will fight, just tote'em back, stow away the women behind the logs here, and march your guns after me; and if thar's half the number of red niggurs they speak of, to be found, you shall see an affa'r of a skrimmage that will be good for your wholesome,—you will, by the etarnal!"

"If the men are of that mind," said Roland, gallantly, "I am not the one to balk them. I will, at least, see whither their inclinations tend; and that the matter may the sooner be decided, I will set out without delay."

"And we who war to escort you, captain," said the Kentuckian, with some embarrassment: "you're a soldier, captain, and you see the case."

"I do; I have no desire to weaken your force; and, I trust, no protection is needed."

"Not an iota; the road is as safe as the furrow of a Virginnee corn-field,—at least till you strike the lower Forks; and *thar* I've heard of no rampaging since last summer: I'll indamnify you against all loss

and mischief,—I will, if it war on my salvation!"

"If you could but spare me a single guide," said Forrester.

"Whar's the use, captain? The road is as broad and cl'ar as a turnpike in the Old Dominion; it leads you, chock up, right on the Upper Ford, whar thar's safe passage at any moment: but, I reckon, the rains will make it look a little wrathy a while, and so fetch your people to a stand-still. But it's a pot soon full and soon empty, and it will be low enough in the morning."

"The Upper Ford?" said Roland, his dream, for so he esteemed it, recurring to his mind: "is there then a Lower Ford?"

"Ay," replied Bruce; "but thar's no passing it in the freshes; and besides the place has a bad name. It war thar old John Ashburn pitched his station, in '78; but the savages made murdering work of him, taking every scalp in the company; and so it makes one sad-like to pass thar, and the more partickelarly that its' all natteral fine ground for an ambush. You'll

see the road, when you are six mile deep in the forest, turning off to the right, under a shivered beech-tree. You are then four miles from the river, or thereabouts, and just that distance, I reckon, from your company. No, captain," he repeated, "the road is wide and open, and a guide war mere lumber on your hands."

This was a point, however, on which the young soldier, doubly solicitous on his kinswoman's account, to avoid mistake, was not so easily satisfied: seeing which, the Kentuckian yielded to his importunity,—perhaps somewhat ashamed of suffering his guests to depart entirely alone,—and began to cast about him for some suitable person who could be prevailed upon to exchange the privilege of fighting Indians for the inglorious duty of conducting wayfarers through the forest. This was no easy task, and it was not until he assumed his military authority, as commander of all the enrolled militia-men in his district, empowered to make such disposition of his forces as he thought fit, that he succeeded in compelling the service of one of his reluctant

followers, under whose guidance Roland and his little party soon after set out.

Their farewells were briefly said, the urgent nature of his duties leaving the hospitable Bruce little opportunity for superfluous speech. He followed them, however, to the bottom of the hill, grasped Roland by the hand; and doing the same thing by Edith, as if his conscience smote him for dismissing her with so little ceremony and such insufficient attendance, he swore that if any evil happened to her on the road, he would rest neither night nor day until he had repaired it, or lost his scalp in the effort.

With this characteristic and somewhat ominous farewell, he took his leave; and the cousins, with their guide and faithful servant, spurred onwards at a brisk pace, until the open fields of the settlement were exchanged for the deep and gloomy woodlands.

CHAPTER VII.

"Wilt thou go with me?"
"I pr'ythee now, lead the way, without more talking."
TEMPEST.

THE sun shone out clearly and brilliantly; the tree-tops, from which the winds had already shaken the rain, rustled freshly to the more moderate breezes that had succeeded them; and Roland, animated by the change, by the brisk pace at which he was riding, and by the hope of soon overtaking his fellow-exiles, met the joyous looks of his kinswoman with a countenance no longer disturbed by care.

And yet there was a solemnity in the scene around them that might have called for other and more sombre feelings. The forest into which they had plunged, was of

the grand and gloomy character which the fertility of the soil, and the absence of the axe for a thousand years, imprint on the western woodlands, especially in the vicinity of rivers. Oaks, elms, and walnuts, tulip-trees and beeches, with other monarchs of the wilderness, lifted their trunks like so many pillars, green with mosses and ivies, and swung their majestic arms, tufted with misletoe, far over head, supporting a canopy,—a series of domes and arches without end,—that had for ages overshadowed the soil. Their roots, often concealed by a billowy undergrowth of shrubs and bushes, oftener by brakes of the gigantic and evergreen cane, forming fences as singular as they were, for the most part, impenetrable, were yet at times visible, where open glades stretched through the woods, broken only by buttressed trunks, and by the stems of colossal vines, hanging from the boughs like cables, or the arms of an oriental banyan; while their luxuriant tops rolled in union with the leafy roofs that supported them. The vague and shadowy prospects opened by these occa-

sional glades, stirred the imagination and produced a feeling of solitude in the mind, greater perhaps than would have been felt, had the view been continually bounded by a green wall of canes.

The road, if such it could be called, through this noble forest, was, like that the emigrants had so long pursued through the wilderness, a mere path, designated, where the wood was open, by blazes, or axe-marks on the trees; and where the under-growth was dense, a narrow track cut through the canes and shrubs, scarcely sufficient in many places to allow the passage of two horsemen abreast; though when, as was frequently the case, it followed the ancient routes of the bisons to fords and salt-licks, it presented, as Bruce had described, a wide and commodious highway, practicable even to wheeled carriages.

The gait of the little party over this road was at first rapid and cheery enough; but by and by, having penetrated deeper into the wood, where breezes and sunbeams were alike unknown, they found their progress impeded by a thousand pools and

sloughs, the consequences of the storm, that stretched from brake to brake. These interruptions promised to make the evening journey longer than Roland had anticipated; but he caught, at intervals, the fresh foot-prints of his comrades in the soil where it was not exposed to the rains, and reflected with pleasure, that, travelling even at the slowest pace, he must reach the ford where he expected to find them encamped, long before dark. He felt, therefore, no uneasiness at the delay; nor did he think any of those obstacles to rapid progress a cause for regret, that gave him the better opportunity to interchange ideas with his fair kinswoman.

His only concern arose from the conduct of his guide, a rough, dark-visaged man, who had betrayed, from the first moment of starting, a sullen countenance, indicative of his disinclination to the duty assigned him; which feeling evidently grew stronger the further he advanced, notwithstanding sundry efforts Forrester made to bring him into a better humour. He displayed no desire to enter into conversation with the

soldier, replying to such questions as were directed at him with a brevity little short of rudeness; and his smothered exclamations of impatience, whenever his delicate followers slackened their pace at a bog or gully, which he had himself dashed through with a manly contempt of mud and mire, somewhat stirred the choler of the young captain.

They had, perhaps, followed him a distance of four miles into the forest, when the occurrence of a wider and deeper pool than ordinary, producing a corresponding delay on the part of Roland, who was somewhat averse to plunging with Edith up to the saddle-girths in mire, drew from him a very unmannerly, though not the less hearty execration on the delicacy of "them thar persons who," as he expressed it, "stumped at a mud-hole as skearily as if every tadpole in it war a screeching Injun."

Of this explosion of ill-temper Roland took no notice, until he had, with the assistance of Emperor, the negro, effected a safe passage for Edith over the puddle;

in the course of which he had leisure to observe that the path now struck into a wide buffalo-street, that swept away through a wilderness of wood and cane-brake, in nearly a straight line, for a considerable distance. He observed also, that the road looked drier and less broken than usual; his satisfaction at which had the good effect of materially abating the rage into which he had been thrown by the uncivil bearing of the guide. Nevertheless, he had no sooner brought his kinswoman safely to land, than, leaving her in the charge of Emperor, he galloped up to the side of his conductor, and gave vent to his indignation in the following pithy query:

"My friend," said he, "will you have the goodness to inform me whether you have ever lived in a land where courtesy to strangers, and kindness and respect to women, are ranked among the virtues of manhood?"

The man replied only by a fierce and angry stare; and plying the ribs of his horse with his heels, he dashed onwards. But Roland kept at his side, not doubting

that a little more wholesome reproof would be of profit to the man, as well as advantageous to his own interests.

"I ask that question," he continued, "because a man from such a land, seeing strangers, and one of them a female, struggling in a bog, would, instead of standing upon dry land, making disrespectful remarks, have done his best to help them through it."

"Strannger;" said the man, drawing up his horse, and looking, notwithstanding his anger, as if he felt the rebuke to be in a measure just, "I am neither hog nor dog, Injun nor outlandish niggur, but a man,—a man, strannger! outside and inside, in flesh, blood, and spirit, just as my Maker made me: though thar may be something of the scale-bark and parsimmon about me, I'll not deny; for I've heer'd on it before. I axes the lady's pardon, if I have offended; and thar's the eend on't."

"The end of it," said Forrester, "will be much more satisfactory, if you give no further occasion for complaint. But now," he continued, Edith drawing nigh, "let us

ride on, and as fast as you like; for the road seems both open and good."

"Strannger," said the guide, without budging an inch, "you have axed me a question; and according to the fa'r rule of the woods, it's my right to ax you another."

"Very well," said Roland, assenting to the justice of the rule: "ask it, and be brief."

"What you war saying of the road is true; that it goes, wide, open, cl'ar and straight, with as good a fence on both sides of it to keep in stragglers, as war ever made of ash, oak, or chesnut rails,—though it's nothing but a natteral bank of canebrake: and so it runs, jest as cl'ar and wide, all the way to the river."

"I am glad to hear it," was the soldier's reply: "but now for your question?"

"Hy'ar it is," said the man, flinging out his hand with angry energy, "I wants to ax of you, as a sodger, for I've heer'd you're of the reggelar sarvice, whether its a wiser and more christian affa'r, when thar's Injuns in the land a murdering of your neighbour's wives and children, and all the

settlements in a screech and a cry, to send an able-bodied man to fight them; or to tote him off, a day's journey thar and back ag'in, to track a road that a blind man on a blind horse could travel, without axing questions of any body? Thar's my question," he added, somewhat vehemently; "and now let's have a sodger's answer!"

"My good friend," said Roland, a little offended, and yet more embarrassed, by the interrogatory, "none can tell better than yourself how much or how little occasion I may have for a guide. Your question, therefore, I leave you to answer yourself. If you think your duty calls you to abandon a woman in the wild woods to such guidance as one wholly unacquainted with them can give, you can depart as soon as you think fit; for I cannot——"

The guide gave him no time to finish the sentence. "You're right, strannger," he cried; "thar is your road, as plain as the way up a hickory, b'aring to a camp of old friends and acquaintances,—and hy'ar is mine, running right slap among fighting Injuns!"

And with that he turned his horse's head, and flourishing his right hand, armed with the ever-constant rifle, above his own, and uttering a whoop expressive of the wild pleasure he felt at being released from his ignoble duty, he dashed across the pool, and galloped in a moment out of sight, leaving Roland and his party confounded at the desertion.

"An outlandish niggur!" muttered old Emperor, on whom this expression of the guide had produced no very favourable effect; "guess the gemman white-man is a niggur himself, and a rogue, and a potater, or whatsomever you call 'em! Leab a lady and a gemman lost in the woods, and neither take 'em on nor take 'em back! —lor-a-massy!"

To this half-soliloquized expression of indignation the soldier felt inclined to add a few bitter invectives of his own; but Edith treating the matter lightly, and affecting to be better pleased at the rude man's absence than she had been with his company, he abated his own wrath, and acknowledged that the desertion afforded

the best proof of the safety of the road; since he could not believe that the fellow, with all his roughness and inhumanity, would have been so base as to leave them, while really surrounded by difficulties. He remembered enough of Bruce's description of the road, which he had taken care should be minute and exact, to feel persuaded that the principal obstructions were now over, and that, as the guide had said, there was no possibility of wandering from the path.

They had already travelled nearly half the distance to the river, and to accomplish the remainder they had yet four hours of daylight. He saw no reason why they should not proceed alone, trusting to their good fate for a fortunate issue to the enterprise. To return to the fort would be only to separate themselves further from their friends, without insuring them a better guide, or, indeed, any guide at all, since it was highly probable they would find it only occupied by women and children. In a word, he satisfied himself that nothing remained for him but to continue his jour-

ney, and trust to his own sagacity to end it to advantage.

He set out accordingly, followed by Edith and Emperor, the latter bringing up the rear in true military style, and handling his rifle as if almost desirous of finding an opportunity to use it in the service of his young mistress.

In this manner they travelled onwards with but little interruption for more than a mile; and Roland was beginning anxiously to look for the path that led to the Lower Ford, when Emperor galloped to the van and brought the party to a halt by reporting that he heard the sound of hoofs following at a distance behind.

"Perhaps,—perhaps," said Edith, while the gleam of her eye, shining with sudden pleasure, indicated how little real satisfaction she had felt at the desertion of their conductor,—"perhaps it is the sour fellow, the guide, coming back, ashamed of his misconduct."

"We will soon see," said Roland, turning his horse to reconnoitre; a proceeding that was, however, rendered unnecessary

by the hurried speed of the comer, who, dashing suddenly round a bend in the road, disclosed to his wondering eyes, not the tall frame and sullen aspect of the guide, but the lighter figure and fairer visage of the girl, Telie Doe. She was evidently arrayed for travel, having donned her best attire of blue cloth, with a little cap of the same colour on her head, under which her countenance, beaming with exercise and anxiety, looked, in both Roland's and Edith's eyes, extremely pretty; much more so, indeed, than either had deemed her to be; while, secured behind the cushion, or pillion, on which she rode,—for not a jot of saddle had she,—was a little bundle containing such worldly comforts as were necessary to one seriously bent upon a journey.

She was mounted upon a sprightly pony, which she managed with more address and courage than would have been augured from her former timorous demeanour; and it was plain that she had put him to his mettle through the woods, with but little regard to the sloughs and puddles which

had so greatly embarrassed the fair Edith. Indeed, it appeared that the exercise which had infused animation into her countenance had bestowed a share also on her spirit; for having checked her horse an instant, and looked a little abashed at the sudden sight of the strangers, she recovered herself in a moment, and riding boldly up, she proceeded, without waiting to be questioned, to explain the cause of her appearance. She had met the deserter, she said, returning to the station, and thinking it was not right the stranger lady should be left without a guide in the woods, she had ridden after her to offer *her* services.

"It was at least somewhat surprising," Roland could not avoid saying, "that the fellow should have found you already equipt in the woods?"

At this inuendo, Telie was somewhat embarrassed, but more so when, looking towards Edith, as if to address her reply to her, she caught the inquiring look of the latter, made still more expressive by the recollection which Edith retained of the

earnest entreaty Telie had made the preceding night, to be taken into her service.

"I will not tell you a falsehood, ma'am," she said at last, with a firm voice: "I was not on the road by chance: I came to follow you. I knew the man you had to guide you was unwilling to go, and I thought he would leave you, as he has done. And, besides, the road is not so clear as it seems; it branches off to so many of the salt-licks, and the tracks are so washed away by the rains, that none but one that knows it can be sure of keeping it long."

"And how," inquired Edith, very pointedly,—for, in her heart, she suspected the little damsel was determined to enter her service, whether she would or not, and had actually run away from her friends for the purpose,—"how, after you have led us to our party, do you expect to return again to your friends?"

"If you will let me go with you as far as Jackson's Station,"—(the settlement at which it was originally determined the emigrants should pass the night,) said the

maiden, humbly, "I will find friends there who will take me home; and perhaps our own people will come for me,—for they are often visiting about among the stations."

This declaration, made in a tone that convinced Edith the girl had given over all hopes of being received into her protection, unless she could remove opposition by the services she might render on the way, pointed out also an easy mode of getting rid of her, when a separation should be advisable, and thus removed the only objection she felt to accept her proffered guidance.

As for Roland, however, he expressed much natural reluctance to drag a young and inexperienced female so far from her home, leaving her afterwards to return as she might. But he perceived that her presence gave courage to his kinswoman; he felt that her acquaintance with the path was more to be relied upon than his own sagacity; and he knew not, if he even rejected her offered services altogether, how he could with any grace communicate the refusal, and leave her abandoned to her

own discretion in the forest. He felt a little inclined, at first, to wonder at the interest she seemed to have taken in his cousin's welfare; but, by and by, he reflected that perhaps, after all, her motive lay in no better or deeper feeling than a mere girlish desire to make her way to the neighbouring station, (twenty miles make but a neighbourly distance in the wilderness,) to enjoy a frolic among her gadding acquaintance.

This reflection ended the struggle in his mind; and turning to her with a smiling countenance, he said, "If you are so sure of getting home, my pretty maid, you may be as certain we will be glad of your company and guidance. But let us delay no longer."

The girl, starting at these words with alacrity, switched her pony and darted to the head of the little party, as if addressing herself to her duty in a business-like way; and there she maintained her position with great zeal, although Roland and Edith endeavoured, for kindness' sake, to make her sensible they desired her to ride with them as a companion, and not at a distance like

a pioneer. The faster they spurred, however, the more zealously she plied her switch, and her pony being both spirited and fresh, while their own horses were both not a little the worse for their long journey, she managed to keep in front, maintaining a gait that promised in a short time to bring them to the banks of the river.

They had ridden perhaps a mile in this manner, when a sudden opening in the cane-brake on the right hand, at a place where stood a beech-tree riven by a thunderbolt in former years, but still spreading its shattered ruins in the air, convinced Roland that he had at last reached the road to the Lower Ford, which Bruce had so strictly cautioned him to avoid. What, therefore, was his surprise when Telie, having reached the tree, turned at once into the by-road, leaving the direct path which they had so long pursued, and which still swept away before them, as spacious and uninterrupted, save by occasional pools, as ever.

"You are wrong," he cried, checking his steed.

"This is the road, sir," said the girl, though in some trepidation.

"By no means," said Forrester: "that path leads to the Lower Ford: here is the shivered beech, which the Colonel described to me."

"Yes, sir," said Telie, hurriedly; "it is the mark: they call it the Crooked Finger-post."

"And a crooked road it is like to lead us, if we follow it," said Roland. "It leads to the Lower Ford, and is not therefore *our* road. I remember the Colonel's direction."

"Yes, sir," said Telie, anxiously,—"to take the beech on the right shoulder, and then down, four miles, to the water."

"Precisely so," said the soldier: "with only this difference, (for, go which way we will, the tree being on the right side of each path, we must still keep it on the right shoulder,) that the road to the Upper Ford, which I am now travelling, is the one for our purposes. Of this I am confident."

"And yet, Roland," said Edith, some-

what alarmed at this difference of opinion, where unanimity was so much more desirable, "the young woman should know best."

"Yes!" cried Telie, eagerly, "I have lived here almost seven years, and been across the river more than as many times. This is the shortest and safest way."

"It may be both the shortest and safest," said Forrester, whose respect for the girl's knowledge of the woods, and ability to guide him through them, began to be vastly diminished; "but *this* is the road Mr. Bruce described. Of this I am positive; and to make the matter still more certain, if need be, here are horse-tracks, fresh, numerous, scarcely washed by the rain, and undoubtedly made by our old companions; whereas *that* path seems not to have been trodden for a twelvemonth."

"I will guide you right," faltered Telie, with anxious voice.

"My good girl," said the soldier, kindly, but positively, "you must allow me to doubt your ability to do that,—at least, on

that path. Here is our road; and we must follow it."

He resumed it as he spoke, and Edith, conquered by his arguments, which seemed decisive, followed him; but looking back, after having proceeded a few steps, she saw the baffled guide still lingering on the rejected path, and wringing her hands with grief and disappointment.

"You will not remain behind us?" said Edith, riding back to her: "You see, my cousin is positive: you must surely be mistaken?"

"I am *not* mistaken," said the girl earnestly; "and, oh, he will repent that ever he took his own way through this forest."

"How can that be? What cause have you to say so?"

"I do not know," murmured the damsel, in woful perplexity; "but—but, sometimes, that road is dangerous."

"Sometimes all roads are so," said Edith, her patience failing when she found Telie could give no better reason for her opposition. "Let us continue: my kins-

man is waiting us, and we must lose no more time by delay."

With these words she again trotted forward, and Telie, after hesitating a moment, thought fit to follow.

But now the animation that had, a few moments before, beamed forth in every look and gesture of the maiden, gave place to dejection of spirits, and even, as Edith thought, to alarm. She seemed as anxious now to linger in the rear, as she had been before to preserve a bold position in front. Her eyes wandered timorously from brake to tree, as if in fear lest each should conceal a lurking enemy; and often, as Edith looked back, she was struck with the singularly mournful and distressed expression of her countenance.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Strange and several noises
Of roaring, shrieking, howling,
And more diversity of sounds, all horrible!"

TEMPEST.

"O look, sir, look sir;
I prophesied, if a gallows were on land,
This fellow could not drown."

TEMPEST.

THESE symptoms of anxiety and alarm affected Edith's own spirits; they did more, they shook her faith in the justice of her kinsman's conclusions. His arguments in relation to the road were indeed unanswerable, and Telie had offered none to weaken them. Yet why should she betray such distress if they were upon the right one? and why, in fact, should she not be supposed to know both the right and

the wrong, since she had, as she said, so frequently travelled both?

These questions Edith could not refrain asking of Roland: who professed himself unable to answer them, unless by supposing the girl had become confused, as he thought was not improbable, or had, in reality, been so long absent from the forest as to have forgotten its paths altogether; which was likely enough, as she seemed a very simple-minded, inexperienced creature.

"But why need we," he said, "trouble ourselves to find reasons for the poor girl's opposition? Here are the tracks of our friends, broader and deeper than ever: here they wind down into the hollow; and there you may see where they have floundered through that vile pool, that is still turbid, where they crossed it. A horrible quagmire! But courage, my fair cousin: it is only such difficulties as these that the road can lead us into."

Such were the expressions with which the young soldier endeavoured to reassure his kinswoman's courage, his own confidence remaining still unmoved; although

in secret he felt somewhat surprised at the coincidence between the girl's recommendations of the by-road and the injunctions of his morning dream. But while pondering over the wonder, he had arrived at the quagmire alluded to, through which the difficulties of conducting his cousin were sufficiently great to banish other matters for a moment from his mind.

Having crossed it at last in safety, he paused to give such instructions or assistance as might be needed by his two followers, when Edith, who had halted at his side, suddenly laid her hand on his arm, and exclaimed with a visage of terror; —"Hark, Roland! do you hear! What is that?"

"Heard him, massa!" ejaculated Emperor from the middle of the bog, with voice still more quavering than the maiden's, and lips rapidly changing from Spanish brown to clayey yellow; "heard him, massa! Reckon it's an Injun! lor-ra-massy!"

"Peace, fool," cried Forrester, bending his looks from the alarmed countenance

of his kinswoman to the quarter whence had proceeded the sound which had so suddenly struck terror into her bosom.

"Hark, Roland! it rises again!" she exclaimed; and Roland now distinctly heard a sound in the depth of the forest to the right hand, as of the yell of a human being, but at a great distance off. At the place which they had reached, the canes and undergrowth of other kinds had disappeared, and a wide glade, stretching over hill and hollow, swept away from both sides of the road further than the eye could see. The trees, standing wider apart than usual, were, if possible, of a more majestic stature; their wide and massive tops were so thickly interlaced, that not a single sunbeam found its way among the gloomy arcades below. A wilder, more solitary, and more awe-inspiring spot, Roland had not before seen; and it was peculiarly fitted to add double effect to sights and sounds of a melancholy or fearful character. Accordingly, when the cry was repeated, as it soon was, though at the same distance as before, it came echoing among the hol-

low arches of the woods with a wild and almost unearthly cadence, the utterance, as it seemed, of mortal agony and despair, that breathed a secret horror through the breasts of all.

"It is the Jibbenainosay!" muttered the shivering Telie: "these are the woods he used to range in most; and they say he screams after his prey! It is not too late: —let us go back!"

"An Injun, massa," said Emperor, stuttering with fright, and yet proceeding both to handle his arms, and to give encouragement to his young mistress; which his age and privileged character, as well as the urgency of the occasion, entitled him to do: "don't be afraid, missie Edie; nebber mind;—ole Emperor will fight and die for missie, old massa John's daughter!"

"Hist!" said Roland, as another scream rose on the air, louder and more thrilling than before.

"It is the cry of a human being!" said Edith,—"of a man in distress!"

"It is indeed," replied the soldier,—"of a man in great peril, or suffering. Remain

here on the road; and if any thing—Nay, if you will follow me, it may be better; but let it be at a distance. If any thing happens to me, set spurs to your horses:—Telie here can at least lead you back to the fort."

With these words, and without waiting to hear the remonstrances or remove the terrors of his companions, the young man turned his horse into the wood, and, guided by the cries, which were almost incessant, soon found himself in the vicinity of the place from which they proceeded. It was a thick grove of beeches of the colossal growth of the west, their stems as tall and straight as the pines of the Alleghanies, and their boughs arched and pendulous like those of the elm, almost sweeping the earth below, over which they cast shadows so dark that scarcely any thing was visible beneath them, save their hoary and spectral trunks.

As Roland, followed by his little party, approached this spot, the cries of the unknown, and as yet unseen, sufferer, fearful even at a distance, grew into the wildest shrieks of fear, mingled with groans, howls,

broken prayers and execrations, and half inarticulate expressions, now of fondling entreaty, now of fierce and frantic command, that seemed addressed to a second person hard by.

A thousand strange and appalling conceits had crept into Roland's mind, when he first heard the cries. One while, he almost fancied he had stumbled upon a gang of savages, who were torturing a prisoner to death; another moment, he thought the yells must proceed from some unlucky hunter, perishing by inches in the grasp of a wild beast, perhaps a bear or panther, with which animals it was easy to believe the forest might abound.

With such horrible fancies oppressing his mind, his surprise may be imagined when, having cocked his rifle and thrown open his holsters, to be prepared for the worst, he rushed into the grove and beheld a spectacle no more formidable than was presented by a single individual,—a man in a shaggy blanket-coat, — sitting on horseback under one of the most venerable of the beeches, and uttering those diaboli-

cal outcries that had alarmed the party, for no imaginable purpose, as Roland was at first inclined to suspect, unless for his own private diversion.

A second look, however, convinced the soldier that the wretched being had sufficient cause for his clamour, being, in truth, in a situation almost as dreadful as any Roland had imagined. His arms were pinioned behind his back, and his neck secured in a halter, (taken, as it appeared, from his steed,) by which he was fastened to a large bough immediately above his head, with nothing betwixt him and death, save the horse on which he sat,—a young and terrified beast, at whose slighest start or motion, he must have swung off and perished, while he possessed no means of restraining the animal whatever, except such as lay in strength of leg and virtue of voice.

In this terrible situation it was plain he had remained for a considerable period, his clothes and hair (for his hat had fallen to the ground) being saturated with rain; while his face purple with blood, his eyes

swollen and protruding from their orbits with a most ghastly look of agony and fear, showed how often the uneasiness of his horse, round whose body his legs were wrapped with the convulsive energy of despair, had brought him to the very verge of strangulation.

The yells of mortal terror, for such they had been, with which he had so long filled the forest, were changed to shrieks of rapture, as soon as he beheld help approach in the person of the astonished soldier.

"Praised be the Etarnal!" he roared; "cut me loose, strannger!—Praised be the Etarnal, and this here dumb beast! —Cut me loose, strannger, for the love of God!"

Such was Roland's intention; for which purpose he had already clapped his hand to his sabre, to employ it in a service more humane than any it had previously known; when, unfortunately, the voice of the fellow did what his distorted countenance had failed to do, and revealed to Roland's indignant eyes the author of all his present difficulties, the thief of the pinfold, the

robber of Brown Briareus,—in a word, the redoubtable Captain Ralph Stackpole.

In a moment, Roland understood the mystery which he had been before too excited to inquire into. He remembered the hints of Bruce, and he had learned enough of border customs and principles to perceive that the justice of the woods had at last overtaken the horse-thief. The pursuing party had captured him,—taken him in the very manner, while still in possession of the 'two-year-old pony,' and at once adjudged him to the penalty prescribed by the border code,—tied his arms, noosed him with the halter of the stolen horse, and left him to swing, as soon as the animal should be tired of supporting him.

There was a kind of dreadful poetical justice in thus making the stolen horse the thief's executioner: it gave the animal himself an opportunity to wreak vengeance for all wrongs received, and at the same time allowed his captor the rare privilege of galloping on his back into eternity.

Such was the mode of settling such offences against the peace and dignity of the

settlements; such was the way in which Stackpole had been reduced to his unenviable situation; and that all passers-by might take note that the execution had not been done without authority, there was painted upon the smooth white bark of the tree, in large black letters, traced by a finger well charged with moistened gunpowder, the ominous name—JUDGE LYNCH, the Rhadamanthus of the forest, whose decisions are yet respected in the land, and whose authority sometimes bids fair to supersede that of all erring human tribunals.

Thus tied up, his rifle, knife, and ammunition laid under a tree hard by, that he might have the satisfaction, if satisfaction it could be, of knowing they were in safety, the executioners had left him to his fate, and ridden away long since, to attend to other important affairs of the colony.

The moment that Roland understood in whose service he was drawing his sword, a change came over the spirit of his thoughts and feelings, and he returned it very composedly to its sheath,—much to the satisfaction of the negro, Emperor, who, recog-

nising the unfortunate Ralph at the same instant, cried aloud, "'Top, massa! 't ar Captain Stackpole, what stole Brown Briery! Reckon I'll touch the pony on the rib, hah? Hanging too good for him, white niggah t'ief, hah!"

With that, the incensed negro made as if he would have driven the pony from under the luckless Ralph; but was prevented by his master, who, taking a second survey of the spectacle, motioned to the horror-struck females to retire, and prepared himself to follow them.

"'Tarnal death to you, captain! you won't leave me?" cried Ralph, in terror. "Honour bright! Help him that needs help—that's the rule for a Christian!"

"Villain!" said Roland, sternly, "I have no help to give you. You are strung up according to the laws of the settlements, with which I have no desire to interfere. I am the last man you should ask for pity."

"I don't ax your pity, 'tarnal death to me,—I ax your *help!*" roared Ralph: "Cut me loose is the word, and then sw'ar at me atter! I stole your hoss thar:—

well, whar's the harm? Didn't he fling me, and kick me, and bite me into the bargain, the cursed savage? and ar'n't you got him ag'in as good as ever? And besides, didn't that etarnal old Bruce fob me off with a beast good for nothing, and talk big to me besides? and warn't that all fa'r provocation? And didn't you yourself sw'ar ag'in shaking paws with me, and treat me as if I war no gentleman? 'Tarnal death to me, cut me loose, or I'll haunt you, when I'm a ghost, I will, 'tarnal death to me!"

"Cut him down, Roland, for Heaven's sake!" said Edith, whom the surprise and terror of the spectacle at first rendered speechless: "you surely,—no, Roland, you surely can't mean to leave him to perish?"

"Upon my soul," said the soldier,—and we are sorry to record a speech representing him in a light so unamiable,—"I don't see what right I have to release him; and I really have not the least inclination to do so. The rascal is the cause of all our difficulties; and, if evil should happen us,

he will be the cause of that too. But for him, we should be now safe with our party. And besides, as I said before, he is hanged according to Kentucky law; a very good law, as far it regards horse-thieves, for whom hanging is too light a punishment."

"Nevertheless, release him,—save the poor wretch's life," reiterated Edith, to whom Stackpole, perceiving in her his only friend, now addressed the most piteous cries and supplications: "the law is murderous, its makers and executioners barbarians. Save him, Roland I charge you, I entreat you!"

"He owes his life to your intercession," said the soldier; and drawing his sabre again, but with no apparent good-will, he divided the halter by which Ralph was suspended, and the wretch was free.

"Cut the tug, the buffalo-tug!" shouted the culprit, thrusting his arms as far from his back as he could, and displaying the thong of bison-skin, which his struggles had almost buried in his flesh. A single touch of the steel, rewarded by such a yell of transport as was never before heard in

those savage retreats, sufficed to sever the bond; and Stackpole, leaping on the earth, began to testify his joy in modes as novel as they were frantic.

His first act was to fling his arms round the neck of his steed, which he hugged and kissed with the most rapturous affection, doubtless in requital of the docility it had shown when docility was so necessary to it's rider's life; his second, to leap half a dozen times into the air, feeling his neck all the time, and uttering the most singular and vociferous cries, as if to make double trial of the condition of his windpipe; his third, to bawl aloud, directing the important question to the soldier, "How many days has it been since they hanged me? War it to-day, or yesterday, or the day before? or war it a whole year ago? for may I be next hung to the horn of a buffalo, instead of the limb of a beech-tree, if I didn't feel as if I had been squeaking thar ever since the beginning of creation! Cock-a-doodle-doo! him that ar'nt born to be hanged, won't be hanged, nohow!"

Then running to Edith, who sat watching his proceedings with silent amazement, he flung himself on his knees, seized the hem of her riding-habit, which he kissed with the fervour of an adorer, exclaiming with a vehement sincerity that made the whole action still more strangely ludicrous, "Oh! you splendiferous creatur'! you anngeliferous anngel! here am I, Ralph Stackpole the Screamer, that can whip all Kentucky, white, black, mixed, and Injun; and I'm the man to go with you to the ends of the 'arth, to fight, die, work, beg, and steal hosses for you! I am, and you may make a little dog of me; you may, or a niggur, or a hoss, or a door-post, or a backlog, or a dinner,—'tarnal death to me, but you may *eat* me! I'm the man to feel a favour, partickelarly when it comes to helping me out of a halter; and so jist say the word who I shall lick, to begin on; for I'm your slave jist as much as that niggur, to go with you as I said afore, to the ends of the 'arth, and the length of Kentucky over!"

"Away with you, you scoundrel and

jackanapes," said Roland, for to this ardent expression of gratitude Edith was herself too much frightened to reply.

"Strannger!" cried the offended horse-thief, "you cut the tug, and you cut the halter; and so, though you did it only on hard axing, I'd take as many hard words of you as you can pick out of a dictionary, —I will, 'tarnal death to me. But as for madam thar, the anngel, she saved my life, and I go my death in her sarvice; and now's the time to show sarvice, for thar's danger abroad in the forest."

"Danger!" echoed Roland, his anxiety banishing the disgust with which he was so much inclined to regard the worthy horse-thief; "what makes you say that?"

"Strannger," replied Ralph, with a lengthened visage, and a gravity somewhat surprising for him, "I seed the Jibben-ainosay! 'tarnal death to me, but I seed him as plain as ever I seed old Salt! I war a-hanging thar, and squeaking and cussing, and talking soft nonsense to the pony, to keep him out of his tantrums, when what should I see but a great crit-

tur' come tramping through the forest, right off yander by the fallen oak, with a big b'ar before him——"

"Pish!" said the soldier, "what has this to do with danger?"

"Beca'se and beca'se," said Ralph, "when you see the Jibbenainosay, thar's always abbregynes* in the cover. I never seed the crittur' before, but I reckon it war he, for thar's nothing like him in natur'. And so I'm for cutting out of the forest jist on the track of a streak of lightning,—now h'yar, now thar, but on a full run without stopping. And so, if anngeliferous madam is willing, thump me round the'arth with a crab-apple, if I don't holp her out of the bushes, and do all her fighting into the bargain,—I will, 'tarnal death to me!"

"You may go about your business," said Roland, with as much sternness as contempt. "We will have none of your base company."

"Whoop! whoo, whoo, whoo! don't rifle† me, for I'm danngerous!" yelled the

* *Abbregynes*,—aborigines.

† To *rifle*,—to ruffle.

demi-barbarian, springing on his stolen horse, and riding up to Edith: "Say the word marm," he cried; "for I'll fight for you, or run for you, take scalp or cut stick, shake fist or show leg, any thing in reason or out of reason. Strannger thar's as brash* as a new hound in a b'ar fight, or a young hoss in a corn-field, and no safe friend in a forest. Say the word marm,—or if you think it ar'nt manners to speak to a strannger, jist shake your little finger, and I'll follow like a dog, and do you dog's sarvice. Or if you don't like me, say the word, or shake t'other finger, and 'tarnal death to me, but I'll be off like an elk of the prairies!"

"You may go," said Edith, not at all solicitous to retain a follower of Mr. Stackpole's character and conversation: "we have no occasion for your assistance."

"Fawwell!" said Ralph; and turning, and giving his pony a thump with his fist, and a kick with each heel, and uttering a shrill whoop, he darted away through the forest, and was soon out of sight.

* *Brash*,—rash, headstrong, over-valiant.

CHAPTER. IX.

"Something doth approach!"
"What cursed foot wanders this way to-night?"
ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE course of Stackpole was through the woods, in a direction immediately opposite to that which Roland had ridden to his assistance.

"He is going to the Lower Ford," said Telie, anxiously. "It is not too late for us to follow him. If there are Indians in the wood, it is the only way to escape them!"

"And why should we believe there *are* Indians in the wood?" demanded Roland; "because that half-mad rogue, made still madder by his terrors, saw something which his fancy converted into the imagi-

nary Nick of the Woods? You must give me a better reason than that, my good Telie, if you would have me desert the road.—I have no faith in your Jibbenainosays."

But a better reason than her disinclination to travel it, and her fears lest, if Indians were abroad, they would be found lying in ambush at the upper and more frequented pass of the river, the girl had none to give; and, in consequence, Roland, (though secretly wondering at her pertinacity, and still connecting it in thought with his oft-remembered dream,) expressing some impatience at the delays they had already experienced, led the way back to the buffalo-road, resolved to prosecute it with vigour. But Fate had prepared for him other and more serious obstructions.

He had scarcely regained the path, before he became sensible, from the tracks freshly printed in the damp earth, that a horseman, coming from the very river towards which he was bending his way, had passed by, whilst he was engaged in the wood liberating the horse-thief. This was

a circumstance that both pleased and annoyed him. It was so far agreeable, as it seemed to offer the best proof that the road was open, with none of those dreadful savages about it, who had so long haunted the brain of Telie Doe.

But what chiefly concerned the young soldier was the knowledge that he had lost an opportunity of inquiring after his friends, and ascertaining whether they had really pitched their camp on the banks of the river; a circumstance which he now rather hoped than dared to be certain of, the tempest not seeming to have been so violent in that quarter, as, of a necessity, to bring the company to a halt. If they had *not* encamped in the expected place, but, on the contrary, had continued their course to the appointed station, he saw nothing before him but the gloomy prospect of concluding his journey over an unknown road, after night-fall, or returning to the station he had left, also by night; for much time had been lost by the various delays, and the day was now declining fast.

These considerations threw a damp over

his spirits, but taught him the necessity of activity; and he was, accordingly, urging his little party forward with such speed as he could, when there was suddenly heard at a distance on the rear the sound of fire-arms, as if five or six pieces were discharged together, followed by cries not less wild and alarming than those uttered by the despairing horse-thief.

These bringing the party to a stand, the quick ears of the soldier detected the rattling of hoofs on the road behind, and presently there came rushing towards them with furious speed a solitary horseman, his head bare, his locks streaming in the wind, and his whole appearance betraying the extremity of confusion and terror; which was the more remarkable, as he was well mounted, and armed with the usual rifle, knife, and hatchet of the back-woodsman. He looked as if flying from pursuing foes, his eyes being cast backwards, and that so eagerly, that he failed to notice the party of wondering strangers drawn up before him on the road, until saluted by a halloo from Roland; at which he checked his

steed, looking for an instant ten times more confounded and frightened than before.

"You tarnation critturs!" he at last bawled, with the accents of one driven to desperation, "if there a'n't no dodging you, then there *a'n't*. Here's for you, you everlasting varmints—due you darndest!"

With that, he clubbed his rifle, and advanced towards the party in what seemed a paroxysm of insane fury, brandishing the weapon, and rolling his eyes with a ferocity that could have only arisen from his being in that happy frame of mind which is properly termed "frighted out of fear."

"How, you villain!" said Roland, in amazement, "do you take us for wild Indians?"

"What, by the holy hokey, and *a'n't* you?" cried the stranger, his rage giving way to the most lively transports. "Christian men!" he exclaimed in admiration, "and one of 'em a niggur, and two of 'em wimming! oh hokey! You're Captain Forrester, and I've heerd on you! Thought there was nothing in the wood but Injuns, blast their ugly picturs! and blast him,

Sy Jones as was, that brought me among em! And now I'm talking of 'em, Capting, don't stop to ax questions, but run,—cut and run, Capting, for there's an everlasting sight of 'em behind me!—six of 'em, Capting, or my name a'n't Pardon Dodge,—six of em,—all except one, and *him* I shot, the blasted crittur! for, you see, they followed me behind, and they cut me off before; and there was no dodging 'em,—(Dodge's my name, and dodging's my natur',)—without gitting lost in the woods; and it was either losing myself or my scalp; and so that riz my ebenezer, and I banged the first of 'em all to smash,—if I didn't, then it a'n't no matter!"

"What, in heaven's name," said Roland, overcome by the man's volubility and alarm together,—"what means all this? Are there Indians behind us?"

"Five of 'em, and the dead feller,—shocking long-legged crittur he was; jumped out of a bush, and seized me by the bridle—hokey! how he skeared me!—Gun went off of her own accord, and shot him into bits as small as fourpence-ha'pen-

nies. Then there was a squeaking and squalling, and the hull of 'em let fly at me; and then I cut on the back track, and they took and took atter; and, I calculate, if we wait here a quarter of a minute longer, they will be on us jist like devils and roaring lions.—But where shall we run? You can't gin us a hint how to make way through the woods?—Shocking bad woods to be lost in! Bad place here for talking, Capting,—right 'twixt two fires,—six Injuns behind (and one of 'em dead,) and an almighty passel before,—the Ford's full on 'em?"

"What!" said Roland, "did you pass the Ford? and is not Colonel Johnson, with his emigrants, there?"

"Not a man on 'em; saw 'em streaking through the mud, half way to Jackson's. Everlasting lying critturs, them emigrants! told me there was no Injuns on the road; when what should I do but see a hull grist on 'em dodging among the bushes at the river, to surround me, the tarnation critturs. But I kinder had the start on 'em, and I whipped and I cut, and I run, and I dodged.

And so says I, 'I've beat you, you tarnation, scalping varmints!' when up jumps that long-legged feller, and the five behind him; and, blast 'em, that riz my corruption. And I——"

"In a word," said Roland, impatiently, and with a stern accent, assumed perhaps to re-assure his kinswoman, whom the alarming communications of the stranger, uttered in an agony of terror and haste, filled with an agitation which she could not conceal, "you have seen Indians, or you say you have. If you tell the truth, there is no time left for deliberation; if a falsehood——"

"Why should we wait upon the road to question and wonder?" said Telie Doe, with a boldness and firmness that at another moment would have excited surprise; "why should we wait here, while the Indians may be approaching? The forest is open, and the Lower Ford is free."

"If you can yet lead us thither," said Roland, eagerly, "all is not yet lost. We can neither advance nor return. On, maiden, for the love of Heaven."

These hasty expressions revealed to Edith the deep and serious light in which her kinsman regarded their present situation, though at first seeking to hide his anxiety under a veil of composure. In fact, there was not an individual present, on whom the fatal news of the vicinity of the red-man had produced a more alarming impression than on Roland. Young, brave, acquainted with war, and accustomed to scenes of blood and peril, it is not to be supposed that he entertained fear on his own account; but the presence of one whom he loved, and whom he would have rescued from danger at any moment, at the sacrifice of his own life thrice over, was enough to cause, and excuse, a temporary fainting of spirit, and a desire to fly the scene of peril, of which, under any other circumstances, he would have been heartily ashamed. The suddenness of the terror—for up to the present moment he had dreamed of no difficulty comprising danger, or of no danger implying the presence of savages in the forest,—had somewhat shocked his mind from its propriety,

and left him in a manner unfitted to exercise the decision and energy so necessary to the welfare of his feeble and well-nigh helpless followers. The vastness of his embarrassment, all disclosed at once,—his friends and fellow emigrants now far away; the few miles which he had, to the last, hoped separated him from them, converted into leagues; Indian enemies at hand; advance and retreat both alike cut off; and night approaching fast, in which, without a guide, any attempt to retreat through the wild forest would be as likely to secure his destruction as deliverance;—these were circumstances that crowded into his mind with benumbing effect, engrossing his faculties, when the most active use of them was essential to the preservation of his party.

It was at this moment of weakness and confusion, while uttering what was meant to throw some little discredit over the story of Dodge, to abate the terrors of Edith, that the words of Telie Doe fell on his ears, bringing both aid and hope to his embarrassed spirits. *She*, at least, was acquainted with the woods; she, at least, could con-

duct him, if not to the fortified station he had left, (and bitterly now did he regret having left it,) to the neglected ford of the river, which her former attempts to lead him thither, and the memory of his dream, caused him now to regard as a city of refuge pointed out by destiny itself.

"You shall have your way at last, fair Telie," he said, with a laugh, but not of merriment: "Fate speaks for you; and whether I will or not, we must to the Lower Ford."

"You will never repent it," said the girl, the bright looks which she had worn for the few moments she was permitted to control the motions of the party, returning to her visage, and seeming to emanate from a rejoicing spirit;—"they will not think of waylaying us at the Lower Ford!"

With that, she darted into the wood, and, followed by the others, including the newcomer, Dodge, was soon at a considerable distance from the road.

"Singular," said Roland to Edith, at whose rein he now rode, endeavouring to remove her terrors, which, though she

uttered no words, were manifestly overpowering,—" singular, that the girl should look so glad and fearless, while we are, I believe, all horribly frightened. It is, however, a good omen. When one so timorous as she casts aside fear, there is little reason for others to be frighted."

" I hope,—I hope so," murmured Edith. " But—but I have had my omens, Roland, and they were evil ones. I dreamed—— You smile at me!"

" I do," said the soldier, " and not more at your joyless tones, my fair cousin, than at the coincidence of our thoughts. *I* dreamed (for I also have had my visions,) last night, that some one came to me and whispered in my ear ' to cross the river at the Lower Ford,' the Upper being dangerous.' Verily, I shall hereafter treat my dreams with respect. I suppose,—I hope, were it only to prove we have a good angel in common,—that you dreamed the same thing?"

" No,—it was not that," said Edith, with a sad and anxious countenance. " It was a dream that has always been followed

by evil. I dreamed——But it will offend you, cousin?"

"What!" said Roland, "a dream? You dreamed, perhaps, that I forgot both wisdom and affection, when, for the sake of this worthless beast, Briareus, I drew you into difficulty and peril?"

"No, no," said Edith, earnestly, and then added in a low voice, "I dreamed of Richard Braxley!"

"Curse him!" muttered the youth, with tones of bitter passion: "it is to him we owe all that now afflicts us,—poverty and exile, our distresses and difficulties, our fears and our dangers. For a wooer," he added, with a smile of equal bitterness, "methinks he has fallen on but a rough way of proving his regard. But you dreamed of him. Well, what was it? He came to you, with the look of a beaten dog, fawned at your feet, and displaying that infernal will, 'Marry me,' quoth he, 'fair maid, and I will be a greater rascal than before, —I will burn this will, and consent to enjoy Roland Forrester's lands and houses in right of my wife, instead of claiming

them in trust for an heir no longer in the land of the living.' Cur !—and but for you, Edith, I would have repaid his insolence as it deserved. But you ever intercede for your worst enemies. There is that confounded Stackpole, now : I vow to heaven, I am sorry I cut the rascal down !—But you dreamed of Braxley! What said the villain ?"

"He said," replied Edith, who had listened mournfully, but in silence, to the young man's hasty expressions, like one who was too well acquainted with the impetuosity of his temper to think of opposing him in his angry moments, or perhaps because her spirits were too much subdued by her fears to allow her to play the monitress,—"He said, and frowningly, too, that 'soft words were with him the prelude to hard resolutions, and that where he could not win as the turtle, he could take his prey like a vulture;'—or some such words of anger. Now, Roland, I have twice before dreamed of this man, and on each occasion a heavy calamity ensued, and that on the following day. I dreamed of him the night

before our uncle died. I dreamed a second time, and the next day he produced and recorded the will that robbed us of our inheritance. I dreamed of him again last night; and what evil is now hovering over us I know not, but,—it is foolish of me to say so,—yet my fears tell me it will be something dreadful."

"Your fears, I hope, will deceive you," said Roland, smiling in spite of himself at this little display of weakness on the part of Edith. "I have much confidence in this girl, Telie, though I can scarce tell why. A free road and a round gallop will carry us to our journey's end by nightfall: and, at the worst, we shall have bright star-light to light us on. Be comforted, my cousin. I begin heartily to suspect yon cowardly Dodge, or Dodger, or whatever he calls himself, has been imposed upon by his fears, and that he has actually seen no Indians at all. The springing up of a bush from under his horse's feet, and the starting away of a dozen frighted rabbits, might easily explain his conceit of the long-legged Indian and his five murderous accomplices;

and as for the savages seen in ambush at the Ford, the shaking of the cane-brake by the breeze, or by some skulking bear, would as readily account for them. The idea of his being allowed to pass a crew of Indians in their lair, without being pursued, or even fired on, is quite preposterous."

These ideas, perhaps devised to dispel his kinswoman's fears, were scarce uttered before they appeared highly reasonable to the inventor himself; and he straightway rode to Dodge's side, and began to question him more closely than he had before had leisure to do, in relation to those wondrous adventures, the recounting of which had produced so serious a change in the destination of the party.

All his efforts, however, to obtain satisfactory confirmation of his suspicion were unavailing. The man, now in a great measure relieved of his terrors, repeated his story with a thousand details, which convinced Roland that it was, in its chief features, correct. That he had actually been attacked, or fired upon by some persons, Roland could not doubt, having heard the

shots himself. As to the ambush at the Ford, all he could say was, that he had actually seen several Indians,—he knew not the number,—stealing through the wood in the direction opposite the river, as if on the outlook for some expected party, —Captain Forrester's, he supposed, of which he had heard among the emigrants; and that this giving him the advantage of the first discovery, he had darted ahead with all his speed, until arrested at an unexpected moment by the six warriors, whose guns and voices had been heard by the party.

Besides communicating all the information which he possessed on these points, he proceeded without waiting to be asked, to give an account of his own history; and a very lamentable one it was.

He was from the Down-East country, a representative of the Bay State, from which he had been seduced by the arguments of his old friend Josiah Jones, to go 'a pedlering' with the latter to the new settlements in the West; where the situation of the colonists, so far removed from all mar-

kets, promised uncommon advantages to the adventurous trader. These had been in a measure realized on the upper Ohio; but the prospect of superior gains in Kentucky had tempted the two friends to extend their speculations further; and in an evil hour they embarked their assorted notions and their own bodies in a flat-boat on the Ohio; in the descent of which it was their fortune to be stripped of every thing, after enduring risks without number, and daily attacks from Indians lying in wait on the banks of the river; which misadventures had terminated in the capture of their boat, and the death of Josiah, the unlucky projector of the expedition, Pardon himself barely escaping with his life.

These calamities were the more distasteful to the worthy Dodge, whose inclinations were of no warlike cast, and whose courage never rose to the fighting point, as he freely professed, until goaded into action by sheer desperation. He had "got enough," as he said "of the everlasting Injuns, and of Kentucky, where there was such a shocking deal of 'em, that a peace-

able trader's scalp was in no more security than a rambling scout's;" and, cursing his bad luck and the memory of the friend who had cajoled him into ruin, difficulty, and constant danger, his sole desire was now to return to the safer lands of the East, which he expected to effect most advantageously by advancing to some of the South-eastern stations, and throwing himself in the way of the first band of militia, whose tour of duty in the district was completed, and who should be about to return to their native state. He had got enough of the Ohio, as well as of the Indians; the wilderness-road possessed fewer terrors, and, therefore, appeared to his imagination the more eligible route of escape.

CHAPTER X.

Their way
Lies through the perplex'd paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril.

COMUS.

DODGE's story, which was not without its interest to Roland, though the rapidity of their progress through the woods, and the constant necessity of being on the alert, kept him a somewhat inattentive listener, was brought to an abrupt close by the motions of Telie Doe, who, having guided the party for several miles with great confidence, began at last to hesitate, and betray symptoms of doubt and embarrassment that attracted the soldier's attention.

There seemed some cause for hesitation: the glades, at first broad and open, through

which they had made their way, were becoming smaller, and more frequently interrupted by copses; the wood grew denser and darker; the surface of the ground became broken by rugged ascents and swampy hollows, the one encumbered by stones and mouldering trunks of trees, the other converted by the rains into lakes and pools, through which it was difficult to find a path; whilst the constant turning and winding to right and left, to avoid such obstacles, made it a still greater task to preserve the line of direction which Telie had intimated was the proper one to pursue.

"Was it possible," he asked of himself, "the girl could be at fault?" The answer to this question, when addressed to Telie herself, confirmed his fears. She was perplexed, she was frightened; she had been long expecting to strike the neglected road, with which she professed to be so well acquainted, and sure she was they had ridden far enough to find it. But the hills and swamps had confused her; she was afraid to proceed,—she knew not where she was.

This announcement filled the young soldier's mind with alarm; for upon Telie's knowledge of the woods he had placed his best reliance, conscious that his own experience in such matters was as little to be depended on as that of any of his companions. Yet it was necessary he should now assume the lead himself, and do his best to rescue the party from its difficulties; and this, after a little reflection, he thought he could scarce fail of effecting.

The portion of the forest through which he was rambling was a kind of triangle, marked by the two roads on the east, with its base bounded by the long-looked-for river; and one of these boundaries he must strike, proceed in whatever direction he would. If he persevered in the course he had followed so long, he must of necessity find himself, sooner or later, in the path which Telie had failed to discover, and failed, as he supposed, in consequence of wandering away to the west, so as to keep it constantly on the right-hand, instead of in front. To recover it, then, all that was necessary to be done was to direct his

course to the right, and to proceed until the road was found.

The reasoning was just, and the probability was, that a few moments would find the party on the recovered path. But a half-hour passed by, and the travellers, all anxious and doubting, and filled with gloom, were yet stumbling in the forest, winding amid labyrinths of bog and brake, hill and hollow, that every moment became wilder and more perplexing.

To add to their alarm, it was manifest that the day was fast approaching its close. The sun had set, or was so low in the heavens that not a single ray could be seen trembling on the tallest tree; and thus was lost the only means of deciding towards what quarter of the compass they were directing their steps. The mosses on the trees were appealed to in vain,—as as they will be by all who expect to find them pointing, like the mariner's needle, to the pole. They indicate the quarter from which blow the prevailing humid winds of any region of country; but in the moist and dense forests of the interior, they

are often equally luxuriant on every side of the tree. The varying shape and robustness of boughs are thought to offer a better means of finding the points of the compass; but none but Indians, and hunters grown gray in the woods, can profit by *their* occult lessons. The attempts of Roland to draw instruction from them served only to complete his confusion; and, by and by, giving over all hope of succeeding through any exercise of skill or prudence, he left the matter to fortune and his good horse, riding, in the obstinacy of despair, whithersoever the weary animal chose to bear him, without knowing whether it might be afar from danger, or backwards into the vicinity of the very enemies whom he had laboured so long to avoid.

As he advanced in this manner, he was once or twice inclined to suspect that he was actually retracing his steps, and approaching the path by which he had entered the depths of the wood; and on one occasion he was almost assured that such was the fact, by the peculiar appearance of a brambly thicket, containing many

dead trees, which he thought he had noticed while following in confidence after the leading of Telie Doe.

A nearer approach to the place convinced him of his error, but awoke a new hope in his mind, by shewing him that he was drawing nigh the haunts of men. The blazes of the axe were seen on the trees, running away in lines, as if marked by the hands of the surveyor; those trees that were dead, he observed, had been destroyed by girdling; and on the edge of the tangled brake where they were most abundant, he noticed several stalks of maize, the relics of some former harvest, the copse itself having once been, as he supposed, a corn-field.

"It is only a tomahawk-improvement," said Telie Doe, shaking her head, as he turned towards her a look of joyous inquiry; and she pointed towards what seemed to have been once a cabin of logs of the smallest size,—too small indeed for habitation, but which, more than half fallen down, was rotting away, half hidden under the weeds and brambles that grew, and seemed

to have grown for years, within its little area; "there are many of them in the woods, that were never settled."

Roland did not require to be informed that a 'tomahawk-improvement,' as it was often called in those days, meant nothing more than the box of logs in form of a cabin, which the hunter or land-speculator could build with his hatchet in a few hours, a few girdled trees, a dozen or more grains of corn from his pouch thrust into the soil, with perhaps a few poles laid along the earth to indicate an enclosed field; and that such improvements, as they gave pre-emption rights to the maker, were often established by adventurers, to secure a claim in the event of their not lighting on lands more to their liking.

Years had evidently passed by since the maker of this neglected improvement had visited his territory, and Roland no longer hoped to discover such signs about it as might enable him to recover his lost way. His spirits sunk as rapidly as they had risen, and he was preparing to make one more effort to escape from the forest while the

day-light yet lasted, or to find some stronghold in which to pass the night, when his attention was drawn to Telie Doe, who had ridden a little in advance, eagerly scanning the trees and soil around, in the hope that some ancient mark or footstep might point out a mode of escape.

As she thus looked about her, moving slowly in advance, her pony on a sudden began to snort and prance, and betray other indications of terror, and Telie herself was seen to become agitated and alarmed, retreating back upon the party, but keeping her eyes wildly rolling from bush to bush, as if in instant expectation of seeing an enemy.

"What is the matter?" cried Roland, riding to her assistance. "Are we in enchanted land, that our horses must be frightened as well as ourselves?"

"He smells the war-paint," said Telie, with a trembling voice;—"there are Indians near us!"

"Nonsense!" said Roland, looking around, and seeing, with the exception of the copse just passed, nothing but an open

forest, without shelter or harbour for an ambushed foe. But at that moment Edith caught him by the arm, and turned upon him a countenance more wan with fear than that she had exhibited upon first hearing the cries of Stackpole. It expressed, indeed, more than alarm—it was the highest degree of terror, and the feeling was so overpowering, that her lips, though moving as in the act of speech, gave forth no sound whatever. But what her lips refused to tell, her finger, though shaking in the ague that convulsed every fibre of her frame, pointed out, and Rowland, following it with his eyes, beheld the object that had excited so much emotion.

He started himself, as his gaze fell upon a naked Indian stretched under a tree hard by, and sheltered from view only by a dead bough lately fallen from its trunk, yet lying so still and motionless, that he might easily have been passed by without observation, in the growing dusk and twilight of the woods, had it not been for the instinctive terrors of the pony, which, like other horses, and, indeed, all other domestic

beasts in the settlements, often thus pointed out to their masters the presence of an enemy.

The rifle of the soldier was in an instant cocked and at his shoulder, while the pedler and Emperor, as it happened, were too much discomposed at the spectacle to make any such show of battle. They gazed blankly upon the leader, whose piece, settling down into an aim that must have been fatal, suddenly wavered, and then, to their surprise, was withdrawn.

"The slayer has been here before us," he exclaimed; "the man is dead and scalped already!"

With these words he advanced to the tree, and the others following, they beheld with horror the body of a savage of vast and noble proportions, lying on its face across the roots of the tree, and glued, it might almost be said, to the earth by a mass of coagulated blood, that had issued from the scalped and axe-cloven skull. The fragments of a rifle, shattered, as it seemed, by a violent blow against the tree under which he lay, were scattered at his

side, with a broken powder-horn, a splintered knife, the helve of a tomahawk, and other equipments of a warrior, all in like manner shivered to pieces by the unknown assassin. The warrior seemed to have perished only after a fearful struggle; the earth was torn where he lay, and his hands, yet grasping the soil, were dyed a double red in the blood of his antagonist, or perhaps in his own.

While Roland gazed upon the spectacle, amazed, and wondering in what manner the wretched being had met his death, which must have happened very recently, and whilst his party was within the sound of a rifle-shot, he observed a shudder to creep over the apparently lifeless frame; the fingers relaxed their grasp of the earth, and then clutched it again with violence; a broken, strangling rattle came from the throat; and a spasm of convulsion seizing upon every limb, it was suddenly raised a little upon one arm, so as to display the countenance, covered with blood, the eyes retroverted into their orbits, and glaring with the sightless whites. It was a horrible

spectacle,—the last convulsion of many that had shaken the wretched and insensible, yet still suffering clay, since it had received its death-stroke.

The spasm was the last, and but momentary; yet it sufficed to raise the body of the mangled barbarian so far, that when the pang that excited it suddenly ceased, and with it the life of the sufferer, the body rolled over on the back, and thus lay, exposing to the eyes of the lookers-on two gashes wide and gory on the breast, traced by a sharp knife and a powerful hand, and, as it seemed, in the mere wantonness of a malice and lust of blood which even death could not satisfy. The sight of these gashes answered the question Roland had asked of his own imagination; they were in the form of a *cross;* and as the legend, so long derided, of the forest-fiend recurred to his memory, he responded, almost with a feeling of superstitious awe, to the trembling cry of Telie Doe:—

"It is the Jibbenainosay!" she exclaimed, staring upon the corse with mingled horror and wonder; "Nick of the Woods is up again in the forest!"

CHAPTER XI.

Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.

COMUS.

While heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place;
Not a waste or needless sound,
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide.

COMUS.

THERE was little really superstitious in the temper of Captain Forrester, and however his mind might be at first stirred by the discovery of a victim of the redoubted fiend so devoutly believed in by his host of the preceding evening, it is certain that his credulity was not so much excited as his surprise. He sprang from his horse and

examined the body, but looked in vain for the mark of the bullet that had robbed it of life. No gun-shot wound, at least none of importance, appeared in any part. There was, indeed, a bullet-hole in the left shoulder, and, as it seemed, very recently inflicted: but it was bound up with leaves and vulnerary herbs, in the usual Indian way, shewing that it must have been received at some period anterior to the attack which had robbed the warrior of life. The gashes across the ribs were the only other wounds on the body; that on the head, made by a hatchet, was evidently the one that had caused the warrior's death.

If this circumstance abated the wonder the soldier had first felt on the score of a man being killed at so short a distance from his own party, without any one hearing the shot, he was still more at a loss to know how one of the dead man's race, proverbial for wariness and vigilance, should have been approached by any merely human enemy so nigh as to render fire-arms unnecessary to his destruction. But that a human enemy had effected the slaughter,

inexplicable as it seemed, he had no doubt; and he began straightway to search among the leaves strewn over the ground, for the marks of his footsteps; not questioning that, if he could find and follow them for a little distance, he should discover the author of the deed, and, which was of more moment to himself, a friend and guide to conduct his party from the forest.

His search was, however, fruitless; for, whether it was that the shadows of evening lay too dark on the ground, or that eyes more accustomed than his own to such duties were required to detect a trail among dried forest leaves, it was certain that he failed to discover a single footstep, or other vestige of the slayer. Nor were Pardon Dodge and Emperor, whom he summoned to his assistance, a whit more successful; a circumstance, however, that rather proved their inexperience than the supernatural character of the Jibbenainosay, whose foot-prints, as it appeared, were not more difficult to find than those of the dead Indian, for which they sought equally in vain.

While they were thus fruitlessly engaged, an exclamation from Telie Doe drew their attention to a spectacle, suddenly observed, which to her awe-struck eyes presented the appearance of the very being, so truculent yet supernatural, whose traces, it seemed, were to be discovered only on the breasts of his lifeless victims; and Roland, looking up, beheld with surprise, perhaps even for a moment with the stronger feeling of awe, a figure stalking through the woods at a distance, looking as tall and gigantic in the growing twilight, as the airy demon of the Brocken, or the equally colossal spectres seen on the wild summits of the Peruvian Andes.

Distance and the darkness together rendered the vision indistinct; but Roland could see that the form was human, that it moved onwards with rapid strides, and with its countenance bent upon the earth, or upon another moving object, dusky and of lesser size, that rolled before it, guiding the way, like the bowl of the dervise in the Arabian story; and, finally, that it held in its hands, as if on the watch for an enemy,

an implement wondrously like the firelock of a human fighting man.

At first it appeared as if the figure was approaching the party, and that in a direct line; but presently Roland perceived it was gradually bending its course away to the left, its eyes still so closely fixed on its dusky guide,—the very bear, as Roland supposed, which was said so often to direct the steps of the Jibbenainosay,—that it seemed as if about to pass the party entirely without observation.

But this it made no part of the young soldier's resolutions to permit; and, accordingly, he sprang upon his horse, determined to ride forwards and bring the apparition to a stand, while it was yet at a distance.

"Man or devil, Jibbenainosay or rambling settler," he cried, "it is, at least, no Indian, and therefore no enemy. Holla, friend!" he exclaimed aloud, and dashed forward, followed, though not without hesitation, by his companions.

At the sound of his voice the spectre started and looked up; and then, without betraying either surprise or a disposition to

beat a mysterious retreat, advanced to meet the soldier, walking rapidly, and waving its hand all the while with an impatient gesture, as if commanding the party to halt; a command which was immediately obeyed by Roland and all.

And now it was that, as it drew nigh, its stature appeared to grow less and less colossal, and the wild lineaments with which fancy had invested it faded from sight, leaving the phantom a mere man, of tall frame indeed, but without a single characteristic of dress or person to delight the soul of wonder. The black bear dwindled into a little dog, the meekest and most insignificant of his tribe, being nothing less or more, in fact, than the identical Peter, which had fared so roughly in the hands, or rather under the feet, of Roaring Ralph Stackpole, at the station, the day before; while the human spectre, the supposed fiend of the woods, sinking from its dignity in equal proportion of abasement, suddenly presented to Roland's eyes the person of Peter's master, the humble, peaceful, harmless Nathan Slaughter.

The transformation was so great and unexpected, (for even Roland looked to find in the wanderer, if not a destroying angel, at least some formidable champion of the forest,) that he could scarce forbear a laugh as Nathan came stalking up, followed by little Peter, who stole to the rear as soon as strangers were perceived, as if to avoid the kicks and cuffs which his experience had doubtless taught him were to be expected on all such occasions. The young man felt the more inclined to indulge his mirth, as the character which Bruce had given him of Wandering Nathan, as one perfectly acquainted with the woods, convinced him that he could not have fallen upon a better person to extricate him from his dangerous dilemma, and thus relieved his breast of a mountain of anxiety and distress.

But the laugh with which he greeted his approach found no response from Nathan himself, who, having looked with amazement upon Edith and Telie, as if marvelling what madness had brought females at that hour into that wild desert, turned at

last to the soldier, demanding, with inauspicious gravity,—

"Friend! does thee think thee is in thee own parlour with thee women at home, that thee shouts so loud, and laughs so merrily? or does thee know thee is in a wild Kentucky forest, with murdering Injuns all around thee?"

"I trust not," said Roland, much more seriously, "but, in truth, we all took you for Nick of the Woods, the redoutable Nick himself; and you must allow, that our terrors were ridiculous enough, when they could convert a peaceful man like you into such a blood-thirsty creature. That there are Indians in the wood I can well believe, having the evidence of Dodge, here, who professes to have seen six, and killed one, and of my own eyes into the bargain.—Yonder lies one, dead, at this moment, under the walnut-tree, killed by some unknown hand,—Telie Doe says by Nick of the Woods himself.——"

"Friend," said Nathan, interrupting the young man without ceremony, "thee had better think of living Injuns than talk of

dead ones; for, of a truth, thee is like to have trouble with them!"

"Not now, I hope, with such a man as you to help me out of the woods. In the name of heaven, where am I, and whither am I going?"

"Whither thee is going," replied Nathan, "it might be hard to say, seeing that thee way of travelling is none of the straightest: nevertheless, if thee continues thee present course, it is my idea thee is travelling to the Upper Ford of the river, and will fetch it in twelve minutes, or thereabouts, and, in the same space, find theeself in the midst of thirty ambushed Injuns."

"Good heavens!" cried Roland, "have we then been labouring only to approach the cut-throats? There is not a moment, then, to lose, and your finding us is even more providential than I thought. Put yourself at our head, lead us out of this den of thieves,—conduct us to the Lower Ford,—to our companions, the emigrants; or, if that may not be, take us back to the station,—or any where at all, where I may find safety for these females.—For

myself, I am incapable of guiding them longer."

"Truly," said Nathan, looking embarrassed, "I would do what I could for thee, but——"

"*But!* Do you hesitate?" cried the Virginian, in extreme indignation; "will you leave us to perish, when you, and you alone, can guide us from the forest?"

"Friend," said Nathan, in a submissive, deprecating tone, "I am a man of peace; and peradventure, the party being so numerous, the Injuns will fall upon us; and, truly, they will not spare me any more than another; for they kill the non-fighting men, as well as them that fight. Truly, I am in much fear for myself; but a single man might escape."

"If you are such a knave, such a mean-spirited, unfeeling dastard, as to think of leaving these women to their fate," said Roland, giving way to rage, "be assured that the first step will be your last;—I will blow your brains out, the moment you attempt to leave us!"

At these ireful words Nathan's eyes began to widen.

"Truly," said he, "I don't think thee would be so wicked! But thee takes by force that which I would have given with good-will. It was not my purpose to refuse thee assistance; though it is unseemly that one of my peaceful faith should go with fighting-men among men of war, as if to do battle. But, friend, if we should fall upon the angry red-men, truly there will bloodshed come of it; and thee will say to me, 'Nathan, lift up thee gun and shoot;' and peradventure, if I say 'Nay,' thee will call me hard names, as thee did before, saying, 'If thee don't, I will blow thee brains out!'—Friend, I am a man of peace; and if——"

"Trouble yourself no longer on that score," said the soldier, who began to understand how the land lay, and how much the meek Nathan's reluctance to become his guide was engendered by his fears of being called on to take a share in such fighting as might occur, "trouble yourself no longer, we will take care to avoid a contest."

"Truly," said Nathan, "that may not

be as thee chooses, the Injuns being all around thee."

"If a rencontre should be inevitable," said Roland, with a smile, mingling grim contempt of Nathan's pusillanimity with secret satisfaction at the thought of being thus able to secure the safety of his kinswoman, "all that I shall expect of you will be to decamp with the females, whilst we three, Emperor, Pardon Dodge, and myself, cover your retreat: we can, at least, check the assailants, if we die for it!"

This resolute speech was echoed by each of the other combatants, the negro exclaiming, though with no very valiant utterance, "Yes, massa! no mistake in ole Emperor; —will die for missie and massa,"—while Pardon, who was fast relapsing into the desperation that had given him courage on a former occasion, cried out; with direful emphasis, "If there's no dodging the critturs, then there ar'n't; and if I must fight, then I *must;* and them that takes my scalp must gin the worth on't, or it a'n't no matter!"

"Truly," said Nathan, who listened to these several outpourings of spirit with much complacency, "I am a man of peace and amity, according to my conscience; but if others are men of wrath and battle, according to theirs, I will not take it upon me to censure them,—nay, not even if they should feel themselves called upon by hard necessity to shed the blood of their Injun fellow-creatures,—who, it must be confessed, if we should stumble on the same, will do their best to make that necessity as strong as possible. But now let us away, and see what help there is for us; though whither to go, and what to do, there being Injuns before, and Injuns behind, and Injuns all around, truly, truly, it doth perplex me."

And so, indeed, it seemed; for Nathan straightway fell into a fit of musing, shaking his head, and tapping his finger contemplatively on the stock of that rifle, terrible only to the animals that furnished him subsistence, and all the while in such apparent abstraction, that he took no notice of a suggestion made by Roland,—

namely, that he should lead the way to the deserted Ford, where, as the soldier said, there was every reason to believe there were no Indians,—but continued to argue the difficulty in his own mind, interrupting the debate only to ask counsel where there seemed the least probability of obtaining it:

"Peter!" said he, addressing himself to the little dog, and that with as much gravity as if addressing himself to a human adviser, "I have my thoughts on the matter,—what does *thee* think of matters and things?"

"My friend," cried Roland, impatiently, "this is no affair to be intrusted to the wisdom of a brute dog!"

"If there is any one here whose wisdom can serve us better," said Nathan, meekly, "let him speak. Thee don't know Peter, friend, or thee would use him with respect. Many a long day has he followed me through the forest; and many a time has he helped me out of harm and peril from man and beast, when I was at sore shifts to help myself. For truly, friend, as I told thee before, the Injuns have no regard for

men, whether men of peace or war; and an honest, quiet, peace-loving man can no more roam the wood, hunting for the food that sustains life, without the fear of being murdered, than a fighting-man in search of his prey.—Thee sees now what little dog Peter is doing? He runs to the tracks and he wags his tail:—truly, I am of the same way of thinking!"

"What tracks are they?" demanded Roland, as he followed Nathan to the path which the latter had been pursuing when arrested by the soldier, and where the little cur was now smelling about, occasionally lifting his head and wagging his tail, as if to call his master's attention.

"*What* tracks!" echoed Nathan, looking on the youth first with wonder, and then with commiseration, and adding, "It was a tempting of Providence, friend, for *thee* to lead poor helpless women into a wild forest. Does thee not know the tracks of thee own horses?"

"'Sdeath!" said Roland, looking on the marks as Nathan pointed them out in the soft earth, and reflecting with chagrin how

wildly he had been rambling, for more than an hour, since they had been impressed on the soil.

"Thee knows the hoof-marks," said Nathan, now pointing, with a grin, at other tracks of a different appearance among them; "perhaps thee knows *these* foot-prints also?"

"They are the marks of footmen," said the soldier, in surprise; "but how they came there I know not, no footmen being of our party."

The grin that marked the visage of the man of peace widened almost into a laugh, as Roland spoke. "Verily," he cried, "thee is in the wrong place, friend, in the forest! If thee had no footmen with thee, could thee have none *after* thee? Look, friend, here are tracks, not of one man, but of five, each stepping on tiptoe, as if to tread lightly and look well before him,—each with a moccasin on,—each with a toe turned in; each—"

"Enough,—they were Indians!" said Roland, with a shudder, "and they must have been close behind us!"

"Now, friend," said Nathan, "thee will have more respect for Peter; for truly it was Peter told me of these things, when I was peaceably hunting my game in the forest. He shewed me the track of five ignorant persons rambling through the wood, as the hawk flies in the air,—round, round, round, all the time,—or like an ox that has been browsing on the leaves of the buck-eye;* and he shewed me that five evil-minded Shawnees were pursuing in their trail. So thinks I to myself, 'these poor creatures will come to mischief, if no one gives them warning of their danger;' and therefore I started to follow, Peter showing me the way. And truly, if there can any good come of my finding thee in this hard case, thee must give all the thanks and all the praise to poor Peter!"

"I will never more speak ill of a dog

* The buck-eye, or American horse-chestnut, seems to be universally considered, in the West, a mortal poison, both fruit and leaves. Cattle affected by it, are said to play many remarkable antics, as if intoxicated,—turning, twisting, and rolling about and around, until death closes their agonies.

as long as I live," said Roland. "But let us away. I thought our best course was to the Lower Ford; but I find I am mistaken. We must away in the opposite direction."

"Not so," said Nathan, coolly; "Peter is of opinion that we must run the track over again; and, truly, so am I. We must follow these same five Injuns: it is as much as our lives are worth."

"You are mad!" said Roland. "This will be to bring us right upon the skulking cut-throats. Let us fly in another direction: the forest is open before us."

"And how long does thee think it will keep open? Friend, I tell thee, thee is surrounded by Injuns. On the south, they lie at the Ford; on the west, is the river rolling along in a flood; and at the east, are the roads of Shawnees on the scout. Verily, friend, there is but little comfort to think of proceeding in any direction, even to the north, where there are five murdering creatures full before us. But this is my thought, and, I rather think, it is Peter's: if we go to the north, we know

pretty much all the evil that lies before us, and how to avoid it; whereas, by turning to either of the other quarters, we go into danger blindfold."

"And how shall we avoid these five villains before us? asked Roland, anxiously.

"By keeping them before us," replied Nathan; "that is, friend, by following *them*, until such time as they turn where thee turned before them, (and, I warrant me the evil creatures will turn wheresoever thee trail does;) when we, if we have good luck, may slip quietly forward, and leave them to follow us, after first taking the full swing of all thee roundabout vagaries."

"Take your own course," said Roland; "it may be the best. We can, at the worst, but stumble upon these five; and then, (granting that you can, in the meanwhile, bear the females off,) I will answer for keeping two or three of the villains busy. Take your own course," he repeated; "the night is darkening around us—we must do something."

"Thee says the truth," cried Nathan. "As for stumbling unawares on the five evil persons thee is in dread of, trust Peter for that: thee shall soon see what a friend thee has in little dog Peter. Truly, for a peaceful man like me, it is needful I should have some one to tell me when dangerous persons are nigh."

With these words, which were uttered with a good countenance, shewing how much his confidence in the apparently insignificant Peter preserved him from the fears natural to his character and situation, the man of peace proceeded to marshal the company in a line, directing them to follow him in that order, and earnestly impressing upon all the necessity of preserving strict silence upon the march. This being done, he boldly strode forwards, taking a post at least two hundred paces in advance of the others, at which distance, as he gave Roland to understand, he desired the party to follow, as was the more necessary, since their being mounted rendered them the more liable to be observed by distant enemies.

"If thee sees me wave my hand above my head," were his last instructions to the young soldier, who began to be well pleased with his readiness and forecast, "bring thee people to a halt; if thee sees me drop upon the ground, lead them under the nearest cover and keep them quiet: for thee may then be certain there is mischief, or mischievous people, nigh at hand. But verily, friend, with Peter's help, we will circumvent them all."

With this cheering assurance, he now strode forward to his station, and coming to a halt with his dog Peter, Roland immediately beheld the latter run to a post forty or fifty paces further in advance, when he paused to receive the final orders of his master, which were given with a motion of the same hand that a moment after beckoned the party to follow.

Had Roland been sufficiently nigh to take note of proceedings, he would have admired the conduct of the little brute, the unerring accuracy with which he pursued the trail, the soft and noiseless motion with which he stepped from leaf to leaf, casting his eyes ever and anon to the right and

left, and winding the air before him, as if in reality conscious of peril, and sensible that the welfare of the six mortals at his heels depended upon the faithful exercise of all his sagacity. These things, however, from the distance, Roland was unable to observe: but he saw enough to convince him that the animal addressed itself to its task with as much zeal and prudence as its master.

A sense of security, the first felt for several hours, now began to disperse the gloom that had oppressed his spirits; and Edith's countenance, throughout the whole of the adventure a faithful, though doubtless somewhat exaggerated, reflection of his own, also lost much of its melancholy and terror, though without at any moment regaining the cheerful smiles that had decked it at the setting-out. It was left for Roland alone, as his mind regained its elasticity, to marvel at the motley additions by which his party had increased in so short a time to twice its original numbers, and to speculate on the prospects of an expedition committed to the guidance of such a conductor as little Peter.

CHAPTER XII.

I heard the tread
Of hateful steps! I must be viewless now.
COMUS.

THE distance at which Roland with his party followed the guides, and the gloom of the woods, prevented his making any close observations upon their motions, unless when some swelling ridge, nearly destitute of trees, brought them nearer the light of the upper air. At other times, he could do little more than follow with his eye the tall figure of Nathan, plunging from shadow to shadow, and knoll to knoll, with a pace both free and rapid, and little resembling the shambling, hesitating step with which he moved among the haunts of his contemners and oppressors. As for the

dog, little Peter, he was only with difficulty seen when ascending some such illuminated knoll as has been mentioned, when he might be traced creeping along with unbated vigilance and caution.

It was while ascending one of these low, and almost bare swells of ground, that the little animal gave the first proof of that sagacity, or wisdom, as Nathan called it, on which the latter seemed to rely for safety so much more than on his own experience and address. He had no sooner reached the summit of the knoll than he abruptly came to a stand, and by and by cowered to the earth, as if to escape the observation of enemies in front, whose presence he indicated in no other way, unless by a few twitches and flourishes of his tail, which, a moment after, became as rigid and motionless as if, with his body, it had been suddenly converted into stone. The whole action, as far as Roland could note it, was similar to that of a well-trained spaniel marking game, and such was the interpretation the soldier put upon it, until Nathan, suddenly stopping, waved his hand as a

signal to the party to halt, which was immediately obeyed.

The next moment, Nathan was seen creeping up the hill, to investigate the cause of alarm, which he proceeded to do with great caution, as if well persuaded there was danger at hand. Indeed, he had not yet reached the brow of the eminence, when Roland beheld him suddenly drop upon his face, thereby giving the best evidence of the existence of peril of an extreme and urgent character.

The young Virginian remembered the instructions of his guide, to seek shelter for his party, the moment this signal was given; and, accordingly, he led his followers without delay into a little tangled brake hard by, where he charged them to remain in quiet, until the cause of the interruption should be ascertained and removed. From the edge of the brake he could see the guide, still maintaining his position on his face, yet dragging himself upward like a snake, until he had reached the top of the hill and looked over into the maze of forest beyond.

In this situation he lay for several moments, apparently deeply engaged with the scene before him; when Forrester, impatient of his silence and delay, anxiously interested in every turn of events, and perhaps unwilling, at a season of difficulty, to rely altogether on Nathan's unaided observations, gave his horse in charge of Emperor, and ascended the eminence himself; taking care, however, to do as Nathan had done, and throw himself upon the ground when near its summit.

In this way he succeeded in creeping to Nathan's side, when the cause of alarm was soon made made manifest.

The forest beyond the ridge was, for a considerable distance, open and free from undergrowth, the trees standing wide apart, and thus admitting a broad extent of vision, though now contracted by the increasing dusk of evening. Through this expanse, and in its darkest corner, flitting dimly along, Roland's eyes fell upon certain shadows, at first vague and indistinct, but which soon assumed the human form, marching one after the other in a line, and

apparently approaching the very ridge on which he lay, each with the stealthy yet rapid pace of a wild-cat. They were but five in number; but the order of their march, the appearance of their bodies, seemingly half naked, and the busy intentness with which they pursued the trail left so broad and open by the inexperienced wanderers, would have convinced Roland of their savage character, had he possessed no other evidence than that of his own senses.

"They are Indians!" he muttered in Nathan's ear.

"Shawnee creatures," said the latter, with edifying coolness;—"and will think no more of taking the scalps of thee two poor women than of digging off thee own."

"There are but five of them, and——" The young man paused, and the gloom that a spirit so long harassed by fears, though fears for another, had spread over his countenance, was exchanged for a look of fierce decision that better became his features. "Harkee, man," he abruptly resumed, "we cannot pass the ridge with-

out being seen by them; our horses are exhausted, and we cannot hope to escape them by open flight?"

"Verily," said Nathan, "thee speaks the truth."

"Nor can we leave the path we are now pursuing, without fear of falling into the hands of a party more numerous and powerful. Our only path of escape, you said, was over this ridge, and towards yonder Lower Ford?"

"Truly," said Nathan, with a lugubrious look of assent, "what thee says is true: but how we are to fly these evil-minded creatures, with poor frightened women hanging to our legs——"

"We will not fly them!" said Roland, the frown of battle gathering on his brows. "Yonder crawling reptiles,—reptiles in spirit as in movement,—have been dogging our steps for hours, waiting for the moment when to strike with advantage at my defenceless followers; and they will dog us still, if permitted, until there is no escape from their knives and hatchets for either man or woman. There is a way of

stopping them,—there is a way of requiting them!"

"Truly," said Nathan, "there is no such way; unless we were wicked men of the world and fighting-men, and would wage battle with them."

"Why not meet the villains in their own way? There are but five of them,—and footmen too! By heavens, man, we will charge them,—cut them to pieces, and so rid the wood of them! Four strong men like us, fighting, too, in defence of women—"

"*Four!*" echoed Nathan, looking wonder and alarm together; "does thee think to have *me* do the wicked thing of shedding blood? Thee should remember, friend, that I am a follower of peaceful doctrines, a man of peace and amity."

"What!" said Roland, warmly, "would you not defend your life from the villains? Would you suffer yourself to be tomahawked, unresisting, when a touch of the trigger under your finger, a blow of the knife at your belt, would preserve the existence nature and heaven alike call on you

to protect? Would you lie still, like a fettered ox, to be butchered?"

"Truly," said Nathan, "I would take myself away; or, if that might not be, why then, friend,—verily, friend, if I could do nothing else,—truly, I must then give myself up to be murdered."

"Spiritless, mad, or hypocritical!" cried Roland, with mingled wonder and contempt. Then grasping his strange companion by the arm, he cried, "Harkee, man, if you would not strike a blow for yourself,—would you not strike it for another? What if you had a wife, a parent, a child, lying beneath the uplifted hatchet, and you with these arms in your hands,—what! do you tell me you would stand by and see them murdered?—I say, a wife or child!—the wife of your bosom,—the child of your heart!—would you see *them* murdered?"

At this stirring appeal, uttered with indescribable energy and passion, though only in a whisper, Nathan's countenance changed from dark to pale, and his arm trembled in the soldier's grasp. He turned

upon him also a look of extraordinary wildness, and muttered betwixt his teeth an answer that betokened as much confusion of mind as agitation of spirits.

"Friend," he said, "whoever thee is, it matters nothing to thee what might happen, or has happened, in such case made and provided. I am a man, thee is another; thee has thee conscience, and I have mine. If thee will fight, fight: settle it with thee conscience. If thee don't like to see thee kinswoman murdered, and thee thinks thee has a call to battle, do thee best with sword and pistol, gun and tomahawk; kill and slay to thee liking: if thee conscience finds no fault with thee, neither will I. But as for me, let the old Adam of the flesh stir me as it may, I have no one to fight for,—wife or child, parent or kinsman, I have none: if thee will hunt the world over, thee will not find one in it that is my kinsman or relative."

"But I ask you," said Roland, somewhat surprised at the turn of Nathan's answer, "I ask you, if you *had* a wife or child——"

"But I have *not*," cried Nathan, interrupting him vehemently; "and therefore, friend, why should thee speak of them? Them that are dead, let them rest: they can never cry to me more.—Think of thee own blood, and do what seems best to thee for the good thereof."

"Assuredly I would," said Roland, who, however much his curiosity was roused by the unexpected agitation of his guide, had little time to think of any affairs but his own,—"Assuredly I would, could I only count upon your hearty assistance. I tell you, man, my blood boils to look at yonder crawling serpents, and to think of the ferocious object with which they are dogging at my heels; and I would give a year of my life,—ay, if the whole number of years were but ten,—one whole year of all,—for the privilege of paying them for their villany beforehand."

"Thee has thee two men to back thee," said Nathan, who had now recovered his composure; "and with these two men, if thee is warlike enough, thee might do as much mischief as thee conscience calls for.

But, truly, it becomes not a man of peace like me to speak of strife and bloodshed. —Yet, truly," he added, hastily, "I think there must mischief come of this meeting; for, verily, the evil creatures are leaving thee tracks, and coming towards us!"

"They stop!" said Forrester, eagerly,— "they look about them,—they have lost the track,—they are coming this way! You will not fight, yet you may counsel.—What shall I do? Shall I attack them? What *can* I do?"

"Friend," replied Nathan, briskly, "I can't tell what thee can do; but I can tell thee what a man of Kentucky, a wicked fighter of Injuns, would do in such a case made and provided. He would betake him to the thicket where he had hidden his women and horses, and he would lie down with his fighting men behind a log; and truly, if these ill-disposed Injun-men were foolish enough to approach, he would fire upon them with his three guns, taking them by surprise, and perhaps, wicked man, killing the better half of them on the spot: and then—"

"And then," interrupted Roland, taking fire at the idea, "he would spring on his horse, and make sure of the rest with sword and pistol?"

"Truly," said Nathan, "he would do no such thing; seeing that, the moment he lifted up his head above the log, he would be liker to have an Injun bullet through it than to see the wicked creature that shot it. Verily, a man of Kentucky would be wiser. He would take the pistols thee speaks of, supposing it were his good luck to have them, and let fly at the evil-minded creatures with them also; not hoping, indeed, to do any execution with such small ware, but to make the Injuns believe there were as many enemies as fire-arms: and, truly, if they did not take to their heels after such a second volley, they would be foolisher Injuns than were ever before heard of in Kentucky."

"By Heaven," said Forrester, "it is good advice; and I will take it!"

"Advice, friend! I don't advise thee," said Nathan, hastily: "truly, I advise to nothing but peace and amity.——I only

tell thee what a wicked Kentucky fighting-man would do,—a man that might think it, as many of them do, as lawful to shoot a prowling Injun as a skulking bear."

"And I would to Heaven," said Roland, "I had but two,—nay, but one of them with me this instant. A man like Bruce were worth the lives of a dozen such scum. —I must do my best."

"Truly, friend," said Nathan, who had listened to the warlike outpourings of the young soldier with a degree of complacency and admiration one would have scarce looked for in a man of his peaceful character, "thee has a conscience of thee own, and if thee will fight these Injun-men from an ambush, truly I will not censure nor exhort thee to the contrary. If thee can rely upon thee two men, the coloured person and the other, thee may hold the evil creatures exceeding uneasy."

"Alas," said Roland, the fire departing from his eyes, "you remind me of my weakness. My men will *not* fight, unless from sheer desperation. Emperor I know

to be a coward, and Dodge, I fear, is no braver."

"Verily," said Nathan, bluffly, "it was foolish of thee to come into the woods in such company,—foolisher still to think of fighting five Injun-men with such followers to back thee; and truly," he added, "it was foolishest of all to put the safe-keeping of such helpless creatures into the hands of one who can neither fight for them nor for himself. Nevertheless, thee is as a babe and suckling in the woods, and Peter and I will do the best we can for thee. It is lucky for thee, that as thee cannot fight, thee has the power to fly; and, truly, for the poor women's sake, it is better thee should leave the woods in peace."

With that, Nathan directed the young man's attention to the pursuing foes, who, having by some mischance lost the trail, had scattered about in search of it, and at last recovered it; though not before two of them had approached so nigh the ridge on which the observers lay as to give just occasion for fear lest they should cross it immediately in front of the party of travellers.

The deadly purpose with which the barbarians were pursuing him, Roland could infer from the cautious silence preserved while they were searching for the lost tracks; and even when these were regained, the discovery was communicated from one to another merely by signs, not a man uttering so much as a word. In a few moments they were seen again, formed in single file, stealing through the woods with a noiseless but rapid pace, and fortunately bending their steps towards a distant part of the ridge, where Roland and his companions had so lately crossed it.

"Get thee down to thee people," said Nathan; "lead them behind the thicket, and when thee sees me beckon thee, carry them boldly over the hill. Thee must pass it while the Shawnee-men are behind yonder clump of trees, which is so luckily for thee on the very comb of the swell. Be quick in obeying, friend, or the evil creatures may catch sight of thee: thee has no time to lose."

The ardour of battle once driven from his mind, Roland was able to perceive the folly

of risking a needless contest betwixt a superior body of wild Indian warriors and his own followers. But had his warlike spirit been at its height, it must have been quelled in a moment by the appearance of his party, left in the thicket, during his brief absence on the hill, to feed their imaginations with terrors of every appalling character; in which occupation, as he judged at a glance, the gallant Dodge and Emperor had been even more industrious than the females, the negro looking the very personification of mute horror, and bending low on his saddle, as if expecting every instant a shower of Indian bullets to be let fly into the thicket; while Pardon expressed the state of his feelings by crying aloud, as soon as Roland appeared, "I say, Capting, if you seed 'em, a'n't there no dodging of 'em no how?"

"We can escape, Roland!" exclaimed Edith, anticipating the soldier's news from his countenance; "the good man can save us?"

"I hope, I trust so," replied the kinsman: "we are in no immediate danger.

Be composed, and, for your lives, all now preserve silence."

A few words served to explain the posture of affairs, and a few seconds to transfer the party from its ignoble hiding-place to the open wood behind it; when Roland, casting his eyes to where Nathan lay motionless on the hill, awaited impatiently the expected signal. Fortunately, it was soon given; and in a few moments more the party, moving briskly but stealthily over the eminence, had plunged into the dark forest beyond, leaving the baffled pursuers to follow afterwards as they might.

"Now," said Nathan, taking post at Roland's side, and boldly directing his course across the track of the enemy, "we have the evil creatures behind us, and, truly, there we will keep them. And now, friend soldier, since such thee is, thee must make thee horses do duty, tired or not; for if we reach not the Old Ford before darkness closes on us, we may find but ill fortune crossing the waters.—Hark, friend! does thee hear?" he exclaimed, coming to a pause, as a sudden and frightful yell sud-

denly rose in the forest beyond the ridge, obviously proceeding from the five foes, and expressing at once surprise, horror, and lamentation: "Did thee not say thee found a dead Injun in the wood?"

"We did," replied the soldier, "the body of an Indian, horribly mangled; and, if I am to believe the strange story I have heard of the Jibbenainosay, it was some of his bloody work."

"It is good for thee, then, and the maidens that is with thee," said Nathan; "for, truly, the evil creatures have found that same dead man, being doubtless one of their own scouting companions; and, truly, they say the Injuns, in such cases made and provided, give over their evil designs in terror and despair; in which case, as I said, it will be good for thee and thee companions. But follow, friends, and tarry not to ask questions. Thee poor women shall come to no harm, if Nathan Slaughter or little dog Peter can help them."

With these words of encouragement, Nathan, bounding along with an activity

that kept him ever in advance of the mounted wanderers, led the way from the open forest into a labyrinth of brakes and bogs, through paths traced rather by wolves and bears than any nobler animals, so wild, so difficult, and sometimes in appearance so impracticable to be pursued, that Roland, bewildered from the first, looked every moment to find himself plunged into difficulties from which neither the zeal of Nathan nor the sagacity of the unpretending Peter could extricate his weary followers.

The night was coming fast, and coming with clouds and distant peals of thunder, the harbingers of new tempests; and how the journey was to be continued, when darkness should at last invest them, through the wild mazes of vine and brake in which they now wandered, was a question which he scarce durst answer. But night came, and still Nathan led the way with unabated confidence and activity, professing a very hearty contempt for all perils and difficulties of the woods, except such as proceeded from "evil-minded Shawnee creatures;" and, indeed, averring that there

was scarce a nook in the forest for miles around with which he was not as well acquainted as with the patches of his own leathern garments.

"Truly," said he, "when I first came to this land, I did make me a little cabin in a place hard by; but the Injuns burned the same: and, verily, had it not been for little Peter, who gave me a hint of their coming, I should have been burned with it. Be of good heart, friend: if thee will keep the ill-meaning Injun-men out of my way, I will adventure to lead thee any-where thee will, within twenty miles of this place, on the darkest night, and that through the thickest cane, or deepest swamp, thee can lay eyes on,—that is, if I have but little dog Peter to help me. Courage, friend; thee is now coming fast to the river; and if we have but good luck in crossing it, thee shall, peradventure, find theeself nearer thee friends than thee thinks for."

This agreeable assurance was a cordial to the spirits of all, and the travellers now finding themselves, though still in profound

darkness, moving through the open woodlands again, instead of the maze of copses that had so long confined them, Roland took advantage of the change to place himself at Nathan's side, and endeavour to draw from him some account of his history, and the causes that had brought him into a position and way of life so ill suited to his faith and peaceful habits. To his questions, however, Nathan seemed little disposed to return satisfactory answers, except in so far as they related to his adventures since the period of his coming to the frontier; of which he spoke very freely, though succinctly.

He had built him cabins, like other lonely settlers, and planted corn-fields, from which he had been driven, time after time, by the evil Shawnees, incurring frequent perils and hardships; which, with the persecutions he endured from his more warlike and intolerant neighbours, gradually drove him into the forest to seek a precarious subsistence from the spoils of the chase.

As to his past life, and the causes that had made him a dweller of the wilderness,

he betrayed so little inclination to satisfy the young man's curiosity, that Roland dropped the subject entirely, not however without suspecting that the imputations Bruce had cast upon his character might have had some foundation in truth.

But while conning these things over in his mind, on a sudden the soldier stepped from the dark forest into a broad opening, canopied only by the sky, sweeping like a road through the wood, in which it was lost behind him; while, in front, it sank abruptly into a deep hollow or gulf, in which was heard the sullen rush of an impetuous river.

END OF VOL. I.

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